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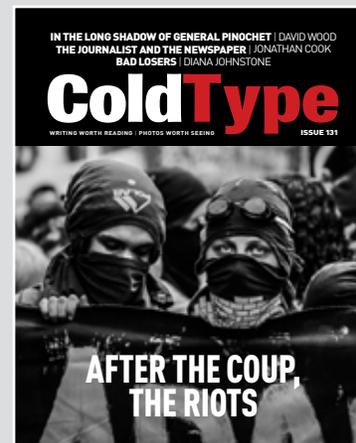
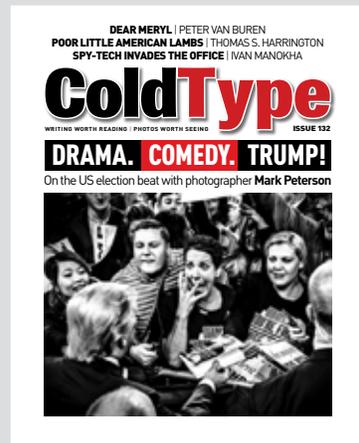
WRITING WORTH READING | PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

ISSUE 139



**PAUL MARTIN, DAVID EDWARDS & DAVID CROMWELL, DARIUS SHAHTAHMASEBI
AND WILLIAM J. ASTORE LOOK BEHIND THE MAINSTREAM HEADLINES**

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BIG READS

4. **CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF LAND THEFT**
By Jonathan Cook
8. **A PSYCHOPATHIC POLICY OF VIOLENCE AND WAR**
By Paul Martin
10. **WHY NORTH KOREA ISN'T A THREAT TO THE USA**
By David Cromwell and David Edwards
14. **TRUMP ALMOST FORGOT HE WANTS TO BOMB IRAN**
By Darius Shahtahmasebi
16. **AMERICA FIRST? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?**
By William Astore



BARKING FOR SCIENCE / Pages 22-23



THE OTHER WAR / Pages 36-39

22. **MARCHING (AND BARKING) FOR SCIENCE**
By Ron Fassbender
24. **PSYCHO-HISTORY IN THE AGE OF TRUMP**
By Chellis Glendinning
28. **HOW BIG TOBACCO WROTE THE POST-TRUTH RULEBOOK**
By Karen Evans-Reeves
31. **AMERICA, THE BEAUTIFUL**
By CJ Hopkins
34. **THATCHER, REAGAN AND ROBIN HOOD**
By Andrew Newell
36. **Survivors**
By Kathy Shorr

INSIGHTS

41. **Crediting the corporate war machine** – Tom Engelhardt
42. **Israel packs seven lies into one statement**– Amital Ben-Abba
43. **A basic guaranteed income? Humbug!** – Rick Salutin
44. **I may be nuts, but at least I'm awake** – Thomas S. Harrington
45. **Coal mining, rugby, and powerful words** – Granville Williams
47. **Religion and the fate of the masses** – Brian Mitchell



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In The Picture



Photographs © Jonathan Cook

One of Israel's most popular beaches, at Dor, south of Haifa, was once Tantura, a Palestinian coastal village. Historians confirmed accounts that more than 200 Palestinian men had been executed there by the Israeli army when the village was captured on May 22, 1948.

Celebrating 50 years of land theft

Jonathan Cook reports on the festivities as Israel consolidates decades of ethnic cleansing

The jubilee is a potent reminder that for Israelis the country's rule over the Palestinians seems as irreversible as the laws of nature

Israel is to hold lavish celebrations over the coming weeks to mark the 50th anniversary of what it calls the “liberation of Judea, Samaria and the Golan Heights” – or what the rest of us describe as the birth of the occupation.

The centrepiece event will take place in Gush Etzion, south of Jerusalem. The West Bank settlement “bloc” enjoys wide support in Israel, not least because it was established long ago by the supposedly left-wing Labour party, now heading the opposition.

The jubilee is a potent reminder that for

Israelis, most of whom have never known a time before the occupation, Israel's rule over the Palestinians seems as irreversible as the laws of nature. But the extravagance of the festivities also underscores the growth over five decades of Israel's self-assurance as an occupier.

Documents found last month in Israel's archives reveal that, when Israel captured East Jerusalem in 1967, its first concern was to hoodwink the international community.

The foreign ministry ordered Israel's ambassadors to mischaracterise its illegal



The only proof that the village of al-Nabi Yusha existed is this shrine. Palestinians were ethnically cleansed from al-Nabi Yusha, close to the Lebanese border, on May 17, 1948. Today, the lands belong to a Jewish settlement called Ramot Naftali.

annexation of East Jerusalem as a simple “municipal fusion.” To avoid diplomatic reprisals, Israel claimed it was necessary to ease the provision of essential services to the occupied Palestinian population.

Interestingly, those drafting the order advised that the deception was unlikely to succeed. The United States had already insisted that Israel commit no unilateral moves. But, within months, Israel had evicted thousands of Palestinians from the Old City and destroyed their homes. Washington and Europe have been turning a blind eye to such actions ever since.

One of the Zionist movement’s favourite early slogans was: “Dunam after dunam, goat after goat.” It served the movement well before Israel’s creation in 1948, but was set aside during that war - when the chance arrived – for a policy of large-scale ethnic

cleansing. (See photos)

After 1967, Israel returned to seizing small areas of territory (measured in dunams), demolishing the odd home, and gradually destroying herding animals – all as ways to slowly drive the Palestinians off most of their land, “liberating” it for Jewish colonisation. The seizure of small areas of territory measured in dunams, the demolition of the odd home, and the gradual destruction of herding animals would slowly drive the Palestinians off most of their land, “liberating” it for Jewish colonisation. If it was done piecemeal, the objections from overseas would remain muffled. It has proved a winning formula.

Fifty years on, the colonisation of East Jerusalem and the West Bank is so entrenched that a two-state solution is nothing more than a pipe dream.

Nonetheless, US president Donald Trump

When Israel captured East Jerusalem in 1967, its first concern was to hoodwink the international community

In The Picture

BELOW: The refugees of Biram, near the border with Lebanon, have been an enduring thorn in Israel's side. On November 4, 1948, the village's 850 Maronite Christians surrendered to the advancing Israeli army without a struggle. They were asked to evacuate Biram "temporarily" while the area was secured, with most relocating to the neighbouring community of Jish. Although the villagers received Israeli citizenship, they have not been allowed to return to Biram.

RIGHT: The minaret of a mosque transformed into a "feature" on a traffic island in Safed, in the northern Galilee. A total of 10,000 Palestinians fled Safed on May 9, 1948, a few days before the establishment of Israel. Today Safed is a Jewish city.



Photographs © Jonathan Cook

Effectively, the US is wiping the slate clean, creating a new baseline for negotiations after decades of Israeli changes stripping the Palestinians of territory and rights

has chosen this inauspicious moment to dispatch an envoy, Jason Greenblatt, to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In a "goodwill" response, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has unveiled a framework for settlement building. It is exactly the kind of formula for deception that has helped Israel consolidate the occupation since 1967. Netanyahu says expansion will be "restricted" to "previously developed" settlements, or "adjacent" areas, or, depending on the terrain, "land close" to a settlement.

Peace Now points out that the settlements already have jurisdiction over some 10 per cent of the West Bank, while far more is treated as "state land." The new framework, says the group, gives the settlers a green light to "build everywhere."

The Trump White House has shrugged its shoulders. A statement following Netan-

yahu's announcement judged the settlements no "impediment to peace," adding that Israel's commitments to previous US administrations would be treated as moot.

Effectively, the US is wiping the slate clean, creating a new baseline for negotiations after decades of Israeli changes stripping the Palestinians of territory and rights.

Although none of this bodes well, Egypt and Jordan's leaders met Trump in April to push for renewed talks between Israel and the Palestinians. The White House is said to be preparing to welcome the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas.

Some senior Palestinians are rightly wary. Abbas Zaki, a Fatah leader, fears Trump will try to impose a regional solution on Arab states, over Abbas's head, designed to "eliminate the Palestinian cause altogether."

David Ben Gurion, Israel's founding fa-



South Africa Forest, a park established by the Jewish National Fund, using tax-deductible donations from South African Jews. The forest is planted over the rubble of the Palestinian village of Luby, after its 2,500 inhabitants were ethnically cleansed on July 16, 1948.

ther, reportedly once said, “What matters is not what the goyim [non-Jews] say, but what the Jews do.”

For nearly a quarter of a century, the Oslo accords dangled an illusory peace carrot that usefully distracted the global community as Israel nearly quadrupled its settler population, making even a highly circumscribed Palestinian state unrealisable.

Now, that game plan is about to be revived in new form. While the US, Israel, Jordan and Egypt focus on the hopeless task of creating a regional framework for peace, Israel will be left undisturbed once again to seize more dunams and more goats.

In Israel, the debate is no longer simply about whether to build settler homes, or about how many can be justified. Government ministers argue instead about the best moment to annex vast areas of the West

Bank associated with so-called settlement blocs such as Gush Etzion.

Israel’s imminent celebrations should lay to rest any confusion that the occupation is still considered temporary. But when occupation becomes permanent, it metamorphoses into something far uglier.

It is past time to recognise that Israel has established an apartheid regime and one that serves as a vehicle for incremental ethnic cleansing. If there are to be talks, ending that outrage must be their first task. **CT**

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Jonathan Cook won the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. His latest books are *Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East* (Pluto Press), and *Disappearing Palestine: Israel’s Experiments in Human Despair* (Zed Books). His website is www.jonathan-cook.net

Israel will be left undisturbed once again to seize more dunams and more goats

A psychopathic policy of violence and war

The USA and its Western allies may consider North Korea to be an enemy to peace, but a peak at history shows where the real problem is, writes **Paul Martin**

America's sole rationale for maintaining the ongoing conflict with North Korea is to justify maintaining the extensive military bases encircling China

As one more US aircraft carrier steams off to confront the North Koreans and threaten nuclear war once again, it is timely to recall that 60 years ago the United States and its allies (including a very compliant New Zealand) began a genocidal bombing of every town and city in the north of Korea. Millions of Koreans died. Since that war ended, the largest and nuclear superpower in the world has refused to sign a peace treaty with North Korea, has stationed thousands of troops and weapons along its South Korean border and has regularly threatened to nuke North Korea, applied annual large scale attack manoeuvres along the border with North Korea, as well as implementing sanctions that in several years since the war, caused mass starvation in the north. Small wonder that the North Korean regime might be considered paranoid and unstable!

Ironically, the United States has absolutely no interest in the Korean peninsula and its people; its sole rationale for maintaining the ongoing conflict with North Korea is to justify maintaining the extensive military bases encircling China, with the support of the Japanese. China has recently proposed "As a first step, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) may suspend its nuclear and missile activities in exchange for

the suspension of large-scale US-Republic of Korea (ROK) military exercises," but this eminently reasonable offer has been once again refused by the United States because it would reduce the threat to China.

While the latest American president is also considered unstable and unreliable, it is important to recognise that every American president's foreign policy since the 1900s has almost entirely consisted of a psychopathic policy of violence and war and repeated acts of genocide: in the Philippines, at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in Korea, Vietnam and Laos, in Iraq, and Libya, as well as support for unspeakable acts of murder and terror in South America. Its full logistical and weaponry support for the starvation of millions of Yemen's children by Saudi Arabia because they do not share the

Saudi regime's extremist and sectarian Wahhabist views, (ably supported in this war of terror by its sycophantic ally, the United Kingdom), tells you exactly where the United States' current moral and ethical foreign policy stands.

Its foreign policy does not recognise the international rules of war or human rights obligations; it stands above any necessity for humanity or compassion or peaceful solution to conflicts. It is in fact, a rogue state.



.....
Paul Martin, based in New Zealand, is the editor of www.newantarctica.com where this article first appeared

CT



“Every American president’s foreign policy since the 1900s has almost entirely consisted of a psychopathic policy of violence and war and repeated acts of genocide”

Article Source: www.newantarctica.com/rogue-state-united-states-america

Why North Korea isn't a threat to the USA

When it talks about nuking the US West Coast: BBC News massively hypes the North Korean 'threat,' say **David Cromwell** and **David Edwards**

This was blatant propaganda, depicting North Korea as a serious threat to the United States, capable of hitting California with a nuclear missile

One of the longstanding functions of the mainstream media is to channel government ideology about who are “the Good Guys” – that’s “us” and our allies – and who are the “Bad Guys” – “Putin’s Russia,” “Saddam’s Iraq,” “Chavez’s Venezuela,” “Gaddafi’s Libya” (until rehabilitated for a while by Bush and Blair) and North Korea.

Of course, “we” often help “Bad Guys” into power, even give them poison gas, sell them arms, and support them through thick and thin. But let’s put all that to one side.

Consider a recent BBC News at Ten segment on the US, China and North Korea that began with presenter Huw Edwards saying: “President Trump has said the United States will ‘solve’ the threat posed by North Korea’s nuclear programme. In an interview with the Financial Times, the president said the US would act alone if China would not intervene. He made his comments ahead of a visit to the US by the Chinese president later this week. Our North America editor, Jon Soper, is at the White House.

“And, Jon, what does this tell us then about President Trump’s approach to this upcoming visit?”

Jon Soper: “Well, Huw, for all the talk of surveillance and phone tapping and wire

taps and Russia, this is the major strategic national security issue, at least as far as this White House is concerned. What to do about North Korea and their growing ability, it seems, to launch a nuclear missile that could hit the west coast of America.”

As we will see, far from being responsible, “impartial” journalism, this was blatant propaganda, depicting North Korea as a serious threat to the United States, capable of hitting California with a nuclear missile.

Consider, by contrast, a careful analysis by the US writer Adam Johnson, in a piece for Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting last month.

Johnson noted that: “Tensions between the United States and North Korea are making their way back into the news after a series of missile tests and presidential Twitter threats. Meanwhile, a conservative think tank – previously thought

all but dead – has seen a resurgence in relevancy, thanks to its alignment with Donald Trump. The result is that the Heritage Foundation has provided much of the narrative backbone for North Korean/US relations in the age of Trump, making the rounds in dozens of media articles and television appearances.”

Johnson continued: “One key feature of reports on North Korea’s nuclear weapons program is the Hypothetical Scary Nuke Map





READY FOR WAR: The USS Carl Vinson on patrol in the Pacific Ocean. US President Donald Trump has used the threat of invasion to persuade North Korea to abandon tests of its nuclear defences. US Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class ZA. Landers

that shows an entirely hypothetical, not-yet-proven-to-have-been-built intercontinental ballistic missile hitting the US mainland.”

Two types of missile, known as KN-14 and KN-08, are depicted in media reports as capable of reaching the United States. Johnson highlighted the crucial fact that: “These missiles have not been tested by North Korea. In other words, the media have been publishing misleading” maps that “buried the fact that the range indicating the US could be nuked had not, in fact, been demonstrated.”

Recall Sopel’s words: “What to do about North Korea and their growing ability, it seems, to launch a nuclear missile that could hit the west coast of America.”

The sole extent of Sopel’s journalistic scrutiny was to insert two words, “it seems,” in a report blatantly boosting the US propaganda message of North Korea as a nuclear “threat” capable of attacking the west coast of the United States.

As for the right-wing Heritage Foundation, Johnson raised questions about its funding ties to the South Korean government and to the US weapons industry: “In the late ’90s, it was criticised for accepting \$1-million in funding directly from the South Korean government. A 2015 report in *The Intercept* (9/15/15) showed the cozy relationship between the foundation and military contractor Lockheed Martin, with Heritage building the requisite marketing collateral to lobby Congress to expand the F-22 program, urging the purchase of 20 planes for resale to Japan, Australia and ‘possibly South Korea.’”

He also points out that: “The Heritage Foundation has been incredibly influential in the Trump administration, having written many of its budget-slashing proposals and shaping policy at a high level.”

On April 4, 2017, we emailed Sopel (jon.sopel@bbc.co.uk):

“Dear Jon Sopel,

“A 2015 report in *The Intercept* (9/15/15) showed the cozy relationship between the Heritage Foundation and military contractor Lockheed Martin”

“The war in Korea has already destroyed that nation of 20,000,000 people. I have never seen such devastation. I have seen, I guess, as much blood and disaster as any living man, and it just curdled my stomach, the last time I was there,” said US General Douglas MacArthur

“On last night’s BBC News at Ten you reported that the White House is concerned by ‘North Korea and their growing ability, it seems, to launch a nuclear missile that could hit the west coast of America.’

“But surely responsible journalism should include scrutiny of government claims, rather than channelling them uncritically to your audience? Indeed, BBC editorial guidelines say that journalists must show ‘appropriate scrutiny . . . to those who are in government, or hold power and responsibility.’ You have not done so here.

“By contrast, US media analyst Adam Johnson has examined the claims surrounding the supposed threat posed by North Korea’s missile programme. Many of the lurid claims and ‘scary nuke maps’ originate with the right-wing Heritage Foundation which has (or had) funding links to South Korea and US military contractor Lockheed Martin.

“Crucially, Johnson notes of the missiles that are depicted as being able to hit the west coast of America: ‘These missiles have not been tested by North Korea.’

“Even a BBC News article concludes of the claim for long-range nuclear missiles: ‘experts have cast doubts on this given the lack of evidence.’

“Why did your report not include these balancing facts and concerns?”

Sopel did not reply.

When the US devastated Korea

Current news coverage about North Korea omits significant history. The fact that the United States devastated the Korean peninsula in the 1950s is regularly buried. US General Douglas MacArthur testified to Congress in 1951 that: “The war in Korea has already destroyed that nation of 20,000,000 people. I have never seen such devastation. I have seen, I guess, as much blood and disaster as any living man, and it just curdled my stomach, the last time I was there. After I looked at that wreckage and those thousands of women and chil-

dren and everything, I vomited.” (Napalm – An American Biography, by Robert Neer, Belknap Press, 2013)

US Air Force General Curtis LeMay was quoted in the same book: “We burned down just about every city in North Korea and South Korea both . . . we killed off over a million civilians and drove several million more from their homes, with the inevitable additional tragedies bound to ensue.”

All this is regularly forgotten in news reports about North and South Korea today. Instead, BBC News and other outlets dutifully report, without blinking, that: “US Vice-President Mike Pence has said his country’s ‘era of strategic patience’ with North Korea is over.”

One BBC News article stated: “North Korea has long been seen to use provocation and brinkmanship to raise tension for its own strategic advantage.”

That this sentence applies to the United States in global affairs, where it goes beyond brinkmanship into actual full-scale invasion and war, is an irony that will not be lost on many readers.

As if on cue, the US Navy has provoked North Korea by deploying a strike force, including a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, in its direction. The Guardian said this was “to provide a presence near the Korean peninsula.” Why the US should provide “a presence” is not questioned; it is simply taken for granted that Washington is the world’s policeman. The Guardian also noted casually that the recent “US strike against a Syrian base is also being seen as a warning to North Korea.”

Again, it is just a given that the US is entitled to make such threats.

In an interview with Democracy Now!, Noam Chomsky sketched the more recent history of US – North Korea relations that is also routinely missing from mainstream media reporting: “In 1994, [Bill] Clinton made – established what was called the Framework Agreement with North Korea. North Korea would terminate its efforts to

develop nuclear weapons. The US would reduce hostile acts. It more or less worked, and neither side lived up to it totally, but, by 2000, North Korea had not proceeded with its nuclear weapons programs. George W. Bush came in and immediately launched an assault on North Korea – you know, ‘axis of evil,’ sanctions and so on. North Korea turned to producing nuclear weapons. In 2005, there was an agreement between North Korea and the United States, a pretty sensible agreement. North Korea agreed to terminate its development of nuclear weapons. In return, it called for a nonaggression pact. So, stop making hostile threats, relief from harsh sanctions, and provision of a system to provide North Korea with low-enriched uranium for medical and other purposes – that was the proposal. George Bush instantly tore it to shreds.

Within days, the US was imposing – trying to disrupt North Korean financial transactions with other countries through Macau and elsewhere. North Korea backed off, started building nuclear weapons again. I mean, maybe you can say it’s the worst regime in history, whatever you like, but they have been following a pretty rational tit-for-tat policy.”

“I mean, maybe you can say it’s the worst regime in history, whatever you like, but they have been following a pretty rational tit-for-tat policy”

Thus, despite standard media misrepresentations to the contrary, North Korea has been following “a pretty rational policy” in the face of “hostile acts” and “harsh sanctions” from, in particular, the US. You would never know that if you relied solely on mainstream media such as BBC News.

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David Cromwell and David Edwards are co-editors of Medialens, the UK media watchdog – www.medialens.org

CT

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Trump almost forgot he wants to bomb Iran

First Syria, then North Korea, now the neoconservatives have turned their sights onto Tehran, writes **Darius Shahtahmasebi**

Missing from this oversimplification of world events is the fact that between 1994 and 2002, the US was on track to keep a lid on nuclear programs in North Korea and the fact that the second Bush administration destroyed this progress

Together with the mainstream media, the United States government has been so distracted playing a game of chicken with adversary states Syria and North Korea that the establishment almost forgot to tie all these developments back to the end-game of the Middle East: Iran. However, things are seemingly back on track for the neoconservative agenda to confront Iran and do what previous administrations failed.

However, things are seemingly back on track for the neoconservatives' agenda to finally confront Iran and do what previous administrations failed to do directly. As the Jerusalem Post notes, US Defense Secretary James "Mad Dog" Mattis just landed in Israel "to talk 'Iran, Iran, Iran.'"

Mattis and Israel's Defence Minister Avigdor Liberman previously met in Washington in March to discuss issues such as the war in Syria and the "threats posed by Iran."

The Post also notes: "Known as a hawk on issues related to Iran, last month in London Mattis recalled a statement he made in 2012 in which he stated that the three gravest threats to American national security were 'Iran, Iran, Iran,' an echo of Liberman's statement at the Munich Security Conference in February that main challenges facing the region were 'Iran, Iran, Iran.'"

After meeting with senior Saudi officials in Riyadh, Mattis told reporters that "everywhere you look, if there is trouble in the region, you find Iran."

Reuters reported that Mattis also said Iran's "destabilising influence" in the Middle East would have to be overcome to end the Yemen war; the US is weighing increasing its support for the Saudi-led coalition currently attacking the war-torn country.

Shortly after the US attacked Syria at the beginning of April, the US ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, turned the focus of the war on Syria toward Iran, demonstrating once again America's unwavering infatuation with a war against the country: "Then, you know, you have to look at the Iranian influence and the fact that we've got to get that out. Syria is in such sad shape, but it doesn't have to be that way. If you look back, so many things could have been done to prevent where we are today. And that's what we need to focus on now," Haley said, as reported by Fox News.

On top of all of this, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson also chimed in, saying: "This deal [the Iranian nuclear accord reached in 2015] represents the same failed approach of the past that brought us to the current imminent threat we face in North Korea. The Trump administration has no intention of passing the



buck to a future administration on Iran. The evidence is clear – Iran’s provocative actions threaten the US, the region, and the world.”

Missing from this oversimplification of world events is the fact that, between 1994 and 2002, the US was on track to keep a lid on nuclear programs in North Korea and the fact that the second Bush administration destroyed this progress. Rather, Bush taught states such as North Korea and Iran a very valuable lesson by invading Iraq in 2003. In Iran and North Korea’s eyes, Saddam Hussein’s mistake was not having nuclear weapons because it would have been a deterrent against a US invasion. The same can be said of Libya, and a similar sentiment was noted by Muammar Gaddafi’s own son when he was interviewed during the NATO air war. “Many countries, Iran and North Korea among them, told us it was our mistake to have stopped developing long-range missiles and to become friendly with the West. One should never trust the West and should always be on alert,” Saif al-Islam Gaddafi told RT.

Tillerson also resorted to the claim that Iran is the leading state sponsor of terrorism, an allegation that poses a number of direct conflicts with reality. Iran may support Hezbollah, but this is a group that heavily fights against ISIS, something Trump told us was his number one priority. Iranian involvement in Yemen is almost nonexistent in light of the fact the mainstream media has rarely produced a shred of evidence to back up the claim

From the Washington Post: “Yet as [the author] argues in a recent article in the May 2016 issue of International Affairs, the Chatham House journal, Tehran’s support for the Houthis is limited, and its influence in Yemen is marginal. It is inaccurate to claim that the Houthis are Iranian proxies.

“Instead, the war in Yemen is driven by local grievances and competition for power among Yemeni actors. The Houthis and Saleh want to overturn the political order that emerged after the uprisings of 2011: Saleh wants to return to power, having lost the

presidency in the wake of popular protests, while the Houthis want a greater say in national affairs.”

Despite these glaring omissions from the Trump administration’s narrative, Iran – with its nonexistent nukes and years of crippling US-imposed sanctions – is allegedly the biggest threat to world peace and somehow retains the revenue to out-sponsor Saudi Arabia when it comes to terrorism. Hillary Clinton’s leaked emails indicate she was aware that Saudi Arabia and Qatar directly fund ISIS, yet Tillerson is not concerned with this.

It is unclear how much of the American public or the world’s population buy this anti-Iranian rhetoric. According to an international poll across 65 countries, much of the international community considers the United States to be the biggest threat to world peace – not Iran or North Korea.

So why does the US consider Iran to be a threat? One way of looking at it is to assess what was aptly described by Noam Chomsky: “Why is Iran regarded here as the greatest threat to world peace? . . . They [the intelligence community] say Iran has very low military spending, even by the standards of the region, much lower than Saudi Arabia, Israel, [and] others. Its strategy is defensive. They want to deter attacks long enough for diplomacy to be entertained. The conclusion, intelligence conclusion – this is a couple years ago – is: If they are developing nuclear weapons, which we don’t know, but if they are, it would be part of their deterrent strategy.”

In case you’re wondering where this is all headed, consider that Israel is preparing for its next war with Hezbollah, something Israeli military officials have warned will be “bloody.” In response, Syrian officials have said Syria will support Hezbollah, which is unsurprising considering Syria has been on the receiving end of Israeli missiles for years.

If the US can’t get to Iran in a more direct way, this will be the road map that can bring a conflict with Iran out into the open and pave the way for a direct military confrontation between the United States and Iran. **CT**

According to an international poll across 65 countries, much of the international community considers the United States to be the biggest threat to world peace – not Iran or North Korea

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Darius Shahtahmasebi
 wrote this article for
www.anti-media.com

America First!

What does that mean?

William J. Astore says Washington doesn't have to venture very far in its quest for unstable leaders with unhinged nuclear ambitions

President Trump's generals have begun to unleash that military in a manner the Obama administration, hardly shy about bombing or surging, deemed both excessive and risky to civilians

What does an “America-first” foreign policy look like under President Donald Trump? As a start, forget the ancient label of “isolationism.” With the end of Trump’s first 100 days approaching, it looks more like a military-first policy aimed at achieving global hegemony, which means it’s a potential doomsday machine.

Candidate Trump vowed he’d make the US military so strong that he wouldn’t have to use it, since no one would dare attack us – deterrence, in a word. The on-the-ground (or in-the-air) reality is already far different. President Trump’s generals have begun to unleash that military in a manner the Obama administration, hardly shy about bombing or surging, deemed both excessive and risky to civilians. Last month, 59 US cruise missiles (value: \$60-million) pummelled an airbase in Syria, a profligate response to a chemical weapons attack in that country which may yet lead to further escalation. Meanwhile, US weapons are to be sold to Sunni monarchies in the Persian Gulf with less concern than ever for human rights abuses, and the Saudis will be provided with yet more of the support they demand for their devastating war on civilians in Yemen. Doubtless further military interventions and escalations

across the Greater Middle East are on that classic “table” in Washington where “all options” are supposedly kept.

Most Americans believe the spin that the US military is all about deterring and preventing attacks on the homeland, especially those orchestrated by “radical Islamic terrorism.” Sold as a deterrent, Washington’s national security state has, in fact, exploded into something that increasingly resembles a mechanism for permanent war. Ignorant of the most basic military strategy, impulsive and bombastic, its present commander-in-chief is being enabled by bellicose advisers and the men he calls “my generals,” who dream of ever bigger budgets. (Even Trump’s promise of a \$54-billion boost to Pentagon spending this coming fiscal year isn’t enough for some senior military officers.)



The realities of trump's new era of winning

Welcome to Trump’s new era of winning. It’s not really about ending wars, but exerting “global reach/global power” while selling loads of weaponry. It promises to spread or prolong chaos in Iraq, Yemen, and possibly Iran, among other countries. In the Greater Middle East, US-led efforts have produced a war-torn Iraq that’s splitting at the seams. US drone strikes and support for an ongoing



BLAST OFF! A Tomahawk missile is launched from the USS Ross during the United States' attack on a Syrian air base after an alleged sarin attack by the Syrian air force.

US Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Robert S. Price

Saudi air campaign have left Yemen lurching toward famine. Syria remains a humanitarian disaster, torn by war even as additional US troops are deployed there. (The Pentagon won't say how many, telling us instead to focus on "capabilities" rather than boots on the ground.) Further east, the never-ending war in Afghanistan is, in Pentagon-speak, "stalemated," which means that the Taliban is actually gaining ground as a new Washington surge-to-nowhere looms. Looking west and south, Africa is the latest playground for the US military's special ops community as the Trump administration prepares, among other things, to ramp up operations in Somalia.

To Trump and his generals, an "America-first" approach to such problems actually means putting the military first, second, and third. It helps that they can't imagine

the actions of that military as destabilising. (Possible future headline: Trump destroys Syria in order to save it.) According to General Joseph Votel, head of US Central Command, for instance, the country that poses "the greatest long-term threat to stability" in the Middle East is Iran, a sentiment seconded by retired general James Mattis, the secretary of defense.

You might excuse the Iranians, as well as the Russians and the Chinese, for thinking differently. To them, the United States is clearly the most destabilising entity in the world. If you were Chinese or Russian or Shia Muslim, how might US military activities appear to you?

- * Expansionist? Check.
- * Dedicated to dominance via colossal military spending and global interventionism? Check.

To the Russians and the Chinese, the United States is clearly the most destabilising entity in the world

With the post-9/11 addition of the Department of Homeland Security and ever more intelligence agencies (17 major ones at last count), the complex only continues to grow beyond all civilian control

* Committed to economic and ideological hegemony via powerful banking and financial interests that seek to control world markets in the name of keeping them “free”? Check.

Wouldn't that be a logical, if unsavoury, assessment? To many outsiders, US leaders seem like the world's leading armed meddlers (and arms merchants), a perception supported by soaring military action and sinking diplomacy under Trump. Serious cuts in funding loom at the State Department, even as the Pentagon budget is being boosted (yet again). To outside observers, Washington's ambitions seem clear: global dominance, achieved and enforced by that “very, very strong” military that candidate Trump claimed he'd never have to use, but is already employing with gusto, if not abandon.

Never underestimate the power of the military-industrial complex

Why do Trump's “America-first” policies add up to military first ones? Why is the Pentagon budget, along with actual military operations, surging on his watch?

More than half a century ago, sociologist C. Wright Mills offered answers that still seem as fresh as this morning's news. In his 1958 essay, “The Structure of Power in American Society,” he dissected the country's “triangle of power.” It consisted, he explained, of corporate leaders, senior military men, and politicians working in concert, but also in a manner that merged corporate agendas with military designs. That combination, he suggested, was degrading the ability of politicians to moderate and control corporate-military imperatives (assuming the latter even wanted to try).

“The [US] military order,” Mills wrote, “once a slim establishment [operating] in a context of civilian distrust, has become the largest and most expensive feature of government; behind smiling public relations, it has all the grim and clumsy efficiency of a great and sprawling bureaucracy. The high military have gained decisive political and

economic relevance. The seemingly permanent military threat places a premium upon them and virtually all political and economic actions are now judged in terms of military definitions of reality.”

For him, the danger was plain enough: the “coincidence of military domain and corporate realm strengthens both of them and further subordinates the merely political man. Not the party politician, but the corporation executive, is now more likely to sit with the military to answer the question: What is to be done?”

Consider the makeup of Trump's administration, a riot of billionaires and multimillionaires. His secretary of state, former ExxonMobil CEO Rex Tillerson, may not be much of a diplomat. Indeed, he seems uninterested in the advice of career State Department personnel, but he does know his way around corporate boardrooms. Trump's national security adviser and his secretaries of defense and homeland security are all either serving generals or recently retired ones. In Trump's inner circle, corporate executives do indeed sit with senior military men to decide what is to be done.

Soon after Mills issued his prophetic critique of America's power elite, President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned about the growing dangers of a military-industrial complex. Since then, Ike's complex has only expanded in power. With the post-9/11 addition of the Department of Homeland Security and ever more intelligence agencies (17 major ones at last count), the complex only continues to grow beyond all civilian control. Its dominant position astride the government is nearly unchallengeable. Figuratively speaking, it's the king of Capitol Hill.

Candidate Trump may have complained about the US wasting trillions of dollars in its recent foreign conflicts, invasions, and occupations, but plenty of American corporations profited from those “regime changes.” After you flatten political states like Iraq, you can rearm them. When not

selling weapons to them or rebuilding the infrastructure you blew up, you can exploit them for resources. Seemingly never-ending wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are an illustration of what happens when corporate interests merge with military imperatives.

While both Mills and Eisenhower warned of such developments, even they might have been startled by the America of 2017. By now, the post-draft, “all volunteer” professional military has become remarkably estranged, if not divorced, from the wider populace, a separation aggravated by an ongoing cult of the warrior within its ranks. Not only are Americans increasingly isolated from “their” war-fighter military, but from America’s wars as well. These continue to be waged without formal congressional declarations and with next to no congressional oversight. Combine this with the Supreme Court’s Citizens United decision, which translated corporate money directly into political activism, and you have what is increasingly a one percent governing system in which a billionaire president presides over the wealthiest cabinet in history in what is now a war capital, while an ever-expanding corporate-military nexus embodies the direst of fears of Mills and Eisenhower.

America’s runaway military machine has little to do these days with deterrence and much to do with the continuation of a state of permanent war. Put it all together and you have a formula for disaster.

Deterring our way to doomsday

Who put America’s oil under all those Middle Eastern deserts? That was the question antiwar demonstrators asked with a certain grim humour before the invasion of Iraq. In Trump’s oft-stated opinion, the US should indeed have just taken Iraq’s oil after the 2003 invasion. If nothing else, he said plainly what many Americans believed, and what various multinational oil companies were essentially seeking to do.

Consider here the plight of President Jimmy Carter. Nearly 40 years ago, Carter urged Americans to scale back their ap-

petites, start conserving energy, and free themselves from a crippling dependency on foreign oil and the unbridled consumption of material goods. After critics termed it his “malaise” speech, Carter did an about-face, boosting military spending and establishing the Carter Doctrine to protect Persian Gulf oil as a vital US national interest. The American people responded by electing Ronald Reagan anyway. As Americans continue to enjoy a consumption-driven lifestyle that gobbles up roughly 25 percent of the world’s production of fossil fuels (while representing only 3 percent of the world’s population), the smart money in the White House is working feverishly to open ever more fuel taps globally. Trillions of dollars are at stake.

Small wonder that, on becoming president, Trump acted quickly to speed the building of new pipelines delayed or nixed by President Obama while ripping up environmental protections related to fossil fuel production. Accelerated domestic production, along with cooperation from the Saudis – Trump’s recent Muslim bans carefully skipped targeting the one country that provided 15 of the 19 terrorists in the 9/11 attacks – should keep fuel flowing, profits growing, and world sea levels rising.

One data point here: The US military alone guzzles more fossil fuel than the entire country of Sweden. When it comes to energy consumption, our armed forces are truly second to none.

With its massive oil reserves, the Middle East remains a hotbed in the world’s ongoing resource wars, as well as its religious and ethnic conflicts, exacerbated by terrorism and the destabilising attacks of the US military. Under the circumstances, when it comes to future global disaster, it’s not that hard to imagine that today’s Middle East could serve as the equivalent of the Balkans of World War I infamy.

If Gavrilo Princip, a Serbian “Black Hand” terrorist operating in a war-torn and much-disputed region, could set the world aflame in 1914, why not an ISIS terrorist just over a

America’s runaway military machine has little to do these days with deterrence and much to do with the continuation of a state of permanent war. Put it all together and you have a formula for disaster

Is North Korea's Kim Jong-un the only unstable leader with unhinged nuclear ambitions currently at work on the world stage?

century later? Consider the many fault lines today in that region and the forces involved, including Russia, Turkey, Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United States, all ostensibly working together to combat terrorism even as they position themselves to maximize their own advantage and take down one another. Under such circumstances, a political temblor followed by a geo-political earthquake seems unbearably possible. And if not an ISIS temblor followed by major quake in the Middle East, there's no shortage of other possible global fault lines in an increasingly edgy world – from sabre-rattling contests with North Korea to jousting over Chinese-built artificial islands in the South China Sea.

As an historian, I've spent much time studying the 20th-century German military. In the years leading up to World War I, Germany was emerging as the superpower of its day, yet paradoxically it imagined itself as increasingly hemmed in by enemies, a nation surrounded and oppressed. Its leaders especially feared a surging Russia. This fear drove them to launch a preemptive war against that country. (Admittedly, they attacked France first in 1914, but that's another story.) That incredibly risky and costly war, sparked in the Balkans, failed disastrously and yet it would only be repeated on an even more horrific level 25 years later. The result: tens of millions of dead across the planet and a total defeat that finally put an end to German designs for global dominance. The German military, praised as the "world's best" by its leaders and sold to its people as a deterrent force, morphed during those two world wars into a doomsday machine that bled the country white, while ensuring the destruction of significant swaths of the planet.

Today, the US military similarly praises itself as the "world's best," even as it imagines itself surrounded by powerful threats (China, Russia, a nuclear North Korea, and global terrorism, to start a list). Sold to the American people during the Cold War as a deterrent force, a pillar of stability against

communist domino-tippers, that military has by now morphed into a potential tipping force all its own.

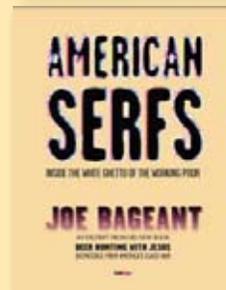
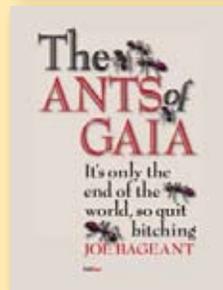
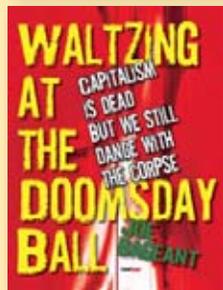
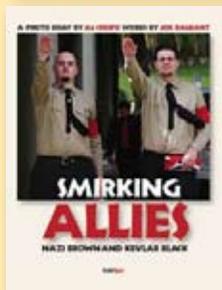
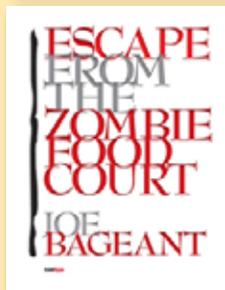
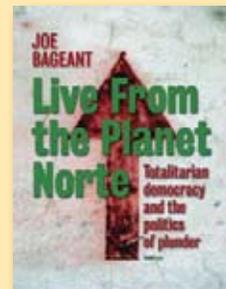
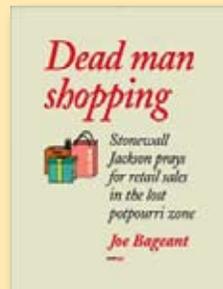
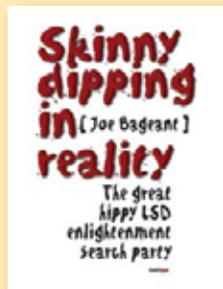
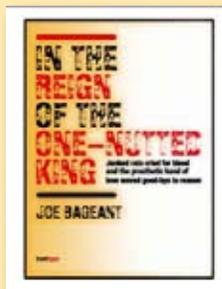
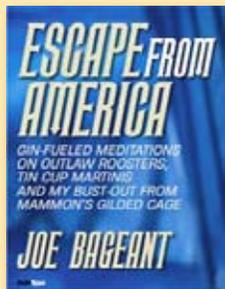
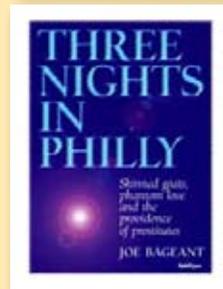
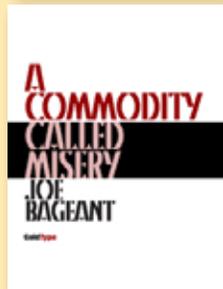
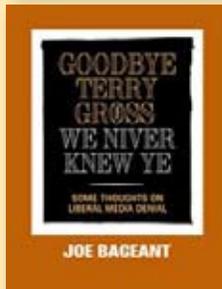
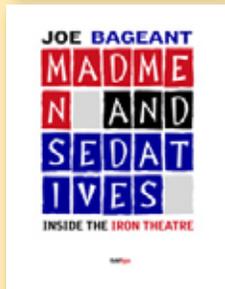
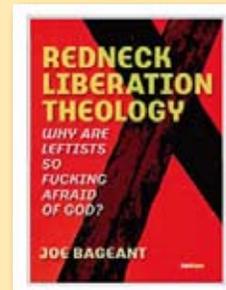
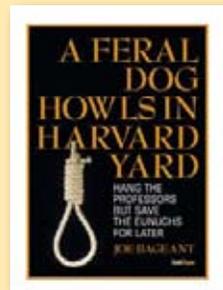
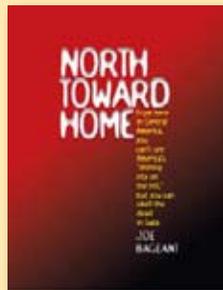
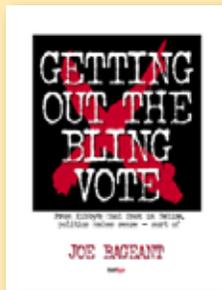
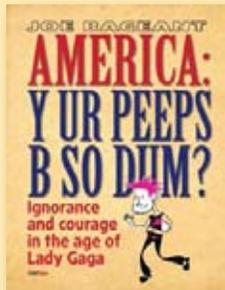
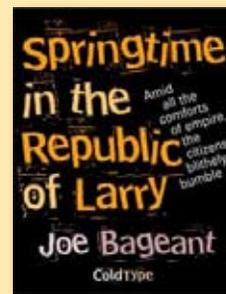
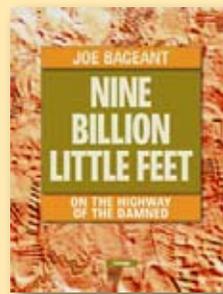
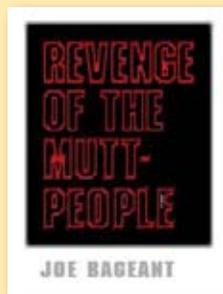
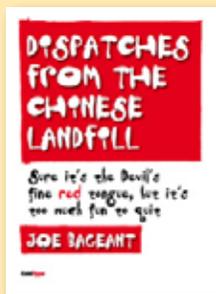
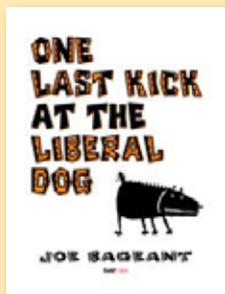
Recall here that the Trump administration has reaffirmed America's quest for overwhelming nuclear supremacy. It has called for a "new approach" to North Korea and its nuclear weapons program. (Whatever that may mean, it's not a reference to diplomacy.) Even as nuclear buildups and brinkmanship loom, Washington continues to spread weaponry – it's the greatest arms merchant of the 21st-century by a wide mark – and chaos around the planet, spinning its efforts as a "war on terror" and selling them as the only way to "win."

In May 1945, when the curtain fell on Germany's last gasp for global dominance, the world was fortunately still innocent of nuclear weapons. It's different now. Today's planet is, if anything, over-endowed with potential doomsday machines – from those nukes to the greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warming.

That's why it's vitally important to recognize that President Trump's "America-first" policies are anything but isolationist in the old 20th-century meaning of the term; that his talk of finally winning again is a recipe for prolonging wars guaranteed to create more chaos and more failed states in the Greater Middle East and possibly beyond; and that an already dangerous Cold War policy of "deterrence," whether against conventional or nuclear attacks, may now have become a machine for perpetual war that could, given Trump's bellicosity, explode into some version of doomsday.

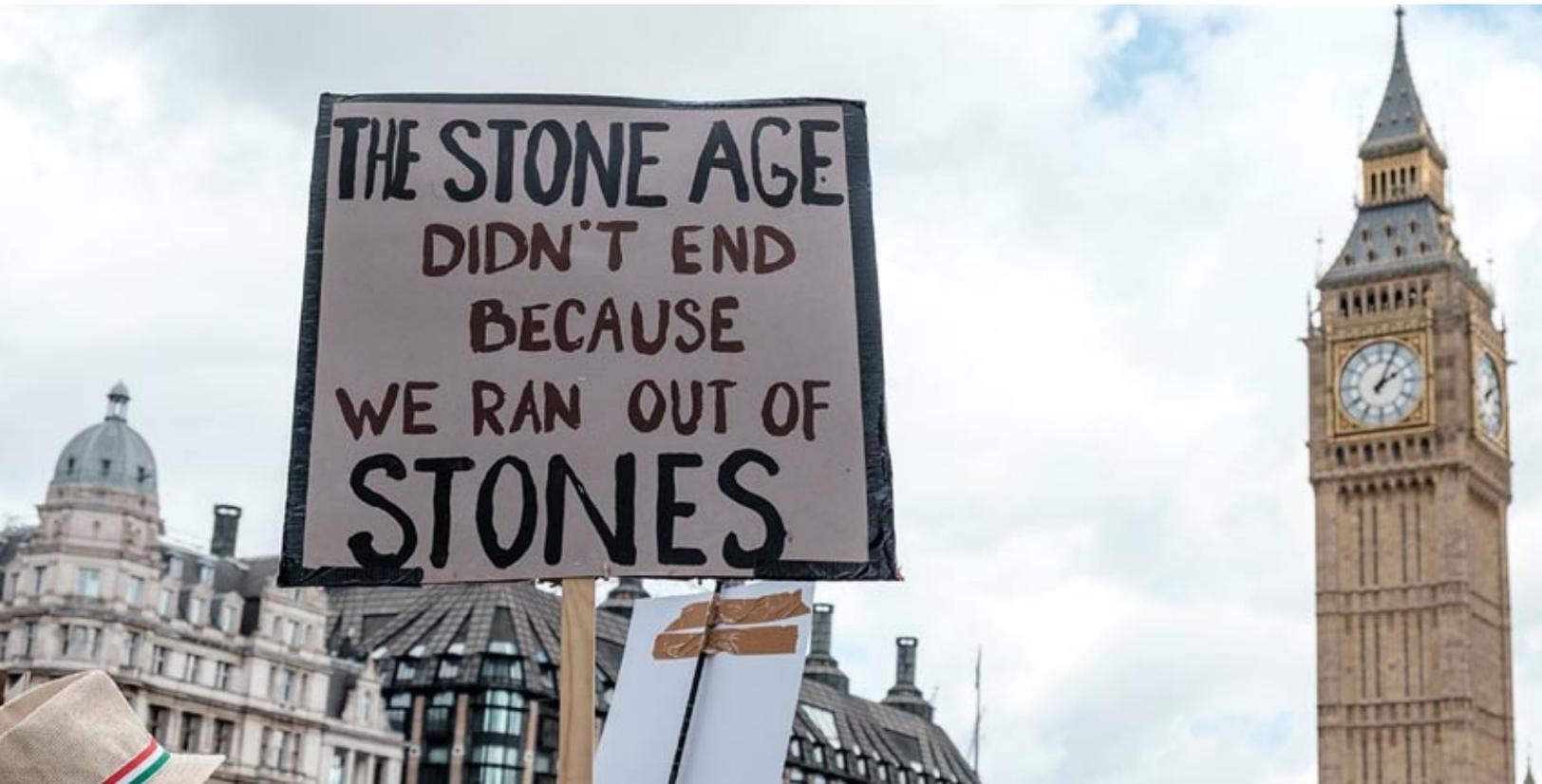
Or, to put the matter another way, consider this question: Is North Korea's Kim Jong-un the only unstable leader with unhinged nuclear ambitions currently at work on the world stage? **CT**

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William Astore is a retired lieutenant colonel (USAF) and history professor. He blogs at www.bracingviews.com – This essay first appeared at www.tomdispatch.com



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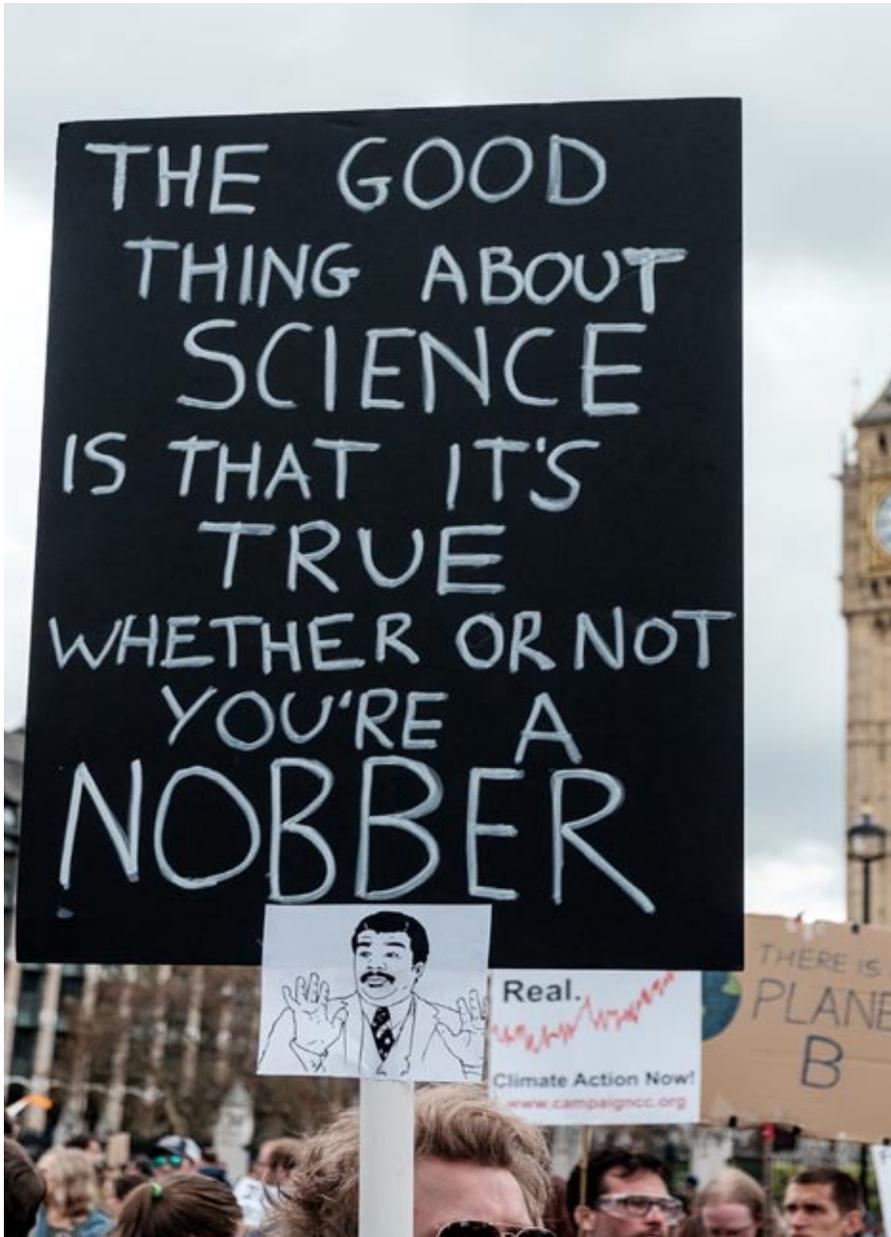
Marching (and barking) for science

Scientists and science enthusiasts in London joined hundreds of thousands of people in more than 400 locations across the globe on April 22, to recognise scientific progress, raise awareness of scientific discovery, and defend scientific integrity from the regressive policies of US President Donald Trump. Huge crowds gathered outside the Science Museum before heading to a rally in Parliament Square

Photographs by Ron Fassbender, a London-based freelance photographer. His Flickr feed is: www.flickr.com/theweeklybull/albums

Read more about the march at www.sciencemarch.london





Psycho-history in the age of Trump

As political uncertainty descends, what is to become of our assumptions of personal freedom and national democracy? asks **Chellis Glendinning**

We inhabit a topsy-turvy, post-truth world defined by the uncertainty produced by Trump's emotional instabilities, post-modern media circus, and ideological manoeuvres

As befits the times, I have been studying Nikolaus Wachsmann's book, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps* ("concentration camps" translate as *Konzentrationslager*, hence "KL") and re-reading *Uprooted Minds: Surviving the Politics of Terror in the Americas*, by Nancy Caro Hollander. As a resident of Bolivia, I've also had the chance to befriend Latin American activists who were jailed and tortured, or fled, during the dictatorships of the 1970s-80s – including one man who was among the very few to escape a massacre committed by the same battalion that years earlier had murdered Che Guevara (*Interview With a Revolutionary*, *ColdType* Issue 121, 2016), and another who fled, directly from being tortured, to the airport to escape to Sweden, his jaw broken and blood soaking his shirt.

Comparisons between Nazi Germany and Trump's US-in-process abound these days. Naomi Wolfe has enlightened us with her recipe of actions cooked up by governments aiming for hegemonic control of populace, military, and institutions in her book, *The End of America*. Through the decades, US progressives have been regaled with grapevine rumours that camps, such as those used to corral Japanese-Americans during World War II, are being outfitted to house "subversives" and "terrorists." And as Ivan Krastev writes in the *New York Times* (*The*

Rise of the Paranoid Citizen, 16 March 2017), "Yet the fundamental change in democratic politics is that when political identities are based on shared conspiracy theories, people are committed not to finding truth but to revealing secrets." Read: consciously-constructed, interest-based inventions or well launched unconscious projections.

It's true: we inhabit a topsy-turvy, post-truth world defined by the uncertainty produced by Trump's emotional instabilities, post-modern media circus, and ideological manoeuvres. So what's a citizen who harbours a long-standing assumption of personal freedom and national democracy to do?

The transition from today's more-or-less democracy to outright fascism is often imagined as an overnight event – as indeed it was on September 11, 1973, in Chile with the early-morning coup d'état that led to President Allende's death and the demolition of the country's democratic-socialist project. Historian Nancy Caro Hollander's interviews with survivors of such transitions in Uruguay and Argentina reveal a slower, step-by-step process. Her interest is the evolution of theory and practice in the psychoanalytic community, before and through the dictatorships, and her interviewees tend to be analysts who favoured the merging of human-rights politics with psychoanalysis and made their services available to poor



REMEMBERING ARGENTINA'S DISAPPEARED: Collections of photos from families whose children and grandchildren had disappeared during the country's years of fascist rule. Photo: Giselle Bordoy, MWAR

and working-class communities and, as repression increased, to the tortured and families of the disappeared. Said interviewees describe not only the strain on their patients, but also their own inner tensions. As client loads became weighted toward those targeted by the military, analysts came to know too much for their own good. Decisions to stay or leave had to be made, often instantaneously, but living under a veil of not knowing how far things would be taken, they themselves became subject to the tangled thinking induced by panic and the near-total erasure of logic that denial offers.

Such responses are endemic to life-and-death predicaments infused with ambiguity. Unless one's name appears on a death-squad list for all to see, the psyche is vulnerable to any number of defences. In the late-1970s, before the movie *The China Syndrome* and the near-meltdown of the Three Mile Island reactor contributed to the detonation of anti-nuclear sentiment crystallising as the Nuclear Freeze effort, psychiatrist Carol Wolman applied feminist conscious-

ness-raising principles to life under the hair-trigger threat of the arms race.

In discussion groups she uncovered a host of psychic mechanisms people had been using for decades to avoid thinking about nuclear weapons: dissociation as in disconnecting one's self from the problem, such as, "We'll be fine. Northern California is the only region that will escape the toxic cloud;" splitting, believing in two contradictory things at the same time, such as thinking that US weapons are beneficial while Soviet arms are evil incarnate; flat-out denial that an untoward event would ever occur; a sense of grandiosity, for instance, that one's study group will stop the arms race; escapism into hedonism or a flurry of activity; displacement, segueing concern onto other social issues that seem more manageable, like donating to the school choir.

Meanwhile, in his acclaimed study of Hiroshima and Nagasaki survivors, *Death in Life*, psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton identified the response to the "unspeakable" – and unfeeling – as psychic numbing.

A doctor in Uruguay who was treating a Tupamaro militant discounted his own vulnerability – until the day he himself was taken prisoner.

What Beckons?

At one point, in 1933-35, German state officials, legal authorities and even some SS commanders demanded and gained a downsizing of the prison camps by thousands of releases – and a popular push to shut the camps down entirely emerged

Given that her interviewees were eager to talk about their experiences and vulnerabilities, Hollander uncovered similar defences amid the muddle of truth and lies that arise as a society embarks on the road from being relatively open to egregiously totalitarian. First, as government repression morphed into out-and-out fascism, so psychological disorders mushroomed. Mental health professionals boasted packed schedules, and, years later, when interviewed, they spoke of using the same unconscious defences as their clients had.

Denial was extensive, as patients and practitioners alike clung to fantasies of “normality” and attempted to live as they had before, sometimes the only bones thrown to admitting awareness of a change being clearing out their houses of subversive material. After the coup, some Chileans sought relief by insisting that the US State Department and CIA (clearly unmanageable entities) could not have orchestrated it. Splitting was rampant. As an analyst in Uruguay explained: “I continued to believe in democracy when I was living in a country that was already totalitarian.” Dissociation abounded as well. A doctor who was treating a Uruguayan Tupamaro militant discounted his own vulnerability – until the day he himself was taken prisoner. An Argentine theatre director trained in psychoanalysis, said: “I employed an instrumental dissociation in order to go on . . . I told myself it would be all right, that I wasn’t a guerrilla, only a playwright whose theatre dealt with the human condition.” The military came for him in 1978.

After regaling myself with research into the vagaries of the human psyche in jeopardy, to enhance my understanding of the process of escalation toward sadistic fascism I turned to Nazi Germany and its creation of death camps. I mentioned my investigation to a friend, a Guatemalan anthropologist who grew up during the genocides and massacres of the 1970s-’80s. One might guess that, given his background,

he would bitterly blurt out that the government absolutely knew from the get-go that its ultimate goal was to gas millions of criminals, social “deviants,” and racially “unacceptables.” Such a belief is exactly the kind of public misconception that Wachsmann corrects as he weaves together the subjective experience of the military, the police, the detainees inside the camps, and the populace outside them into a single, painstakingly researched narrative. In fact (and I use that word because Wachsmann is a thorough historian of Nazism with three books under his belt before KL), the devolution into death factories where dead bodies were produced as if candy bars on assembly lines was not imagined from the get-go. The journey to that end was a years-long, labyrinthine process fuelled by the chaotic decentralisation of the early camps: a seat-of-the-pants experimentation that led to constantly changing goals and techniques, political pressures that sometimes grew and sometimes waned, and the capture of absolute power by Adolf Hitler. At one point, in 1933-35, state officials, legal authorities and even some SS commanders demanded and gained a downsizing of the camps by thousands of releases – and a popular push to shut the camps down entirely emerged. It was only scrapped due to the insistence and political pull of SS honcho/police commander Heinrich Himmler.

At first, the camps were a hodge-podge of state prisons, existing workhouses, vacant hotels, and even pubs run by whoever was available among the Sturmabteilung (SA), the Schutzstaffel (SS), and the police. A potpourri of structures and rules existed, and treatment has been reported as relatively bearable, with inmates often released. The earliest targets were political resisters – communists, nationalists, and social democrats – as well as criminals, “beggars and vagabonds,” particularly as the 1934 Olympics in Berlin approached. But perhaps we could say that “the handwriting was on the wall.”

The first wave of violence – kicking and punching – erupted in 1933. The hands-on perpetrators, the guards, were often poor and working-class men who felt wronged by society and whose anger had been fanned by instruction that inmates represented the very “scum,” “swine,” and “cancer” that threatened Germany purity. Leaders were typically those humiliated by German defeat in World War I, then radicalised in paramilitary struggles against the reformist, social democratic Weimar Republic. Occasional outbursts of cruelty developed into institutional deployment of truncheons, whips, hoses, force-feedings, sexual abuse, perverse medical experiments, and sporadic individual and group killings. Devolution into outright obliteration was not far behind.

Surprisingly to me, the Nazis actually cared about public image – at least in the beginning. When prominent pacifist Carl von Ossietzky was imprisoned in 1933, held up as a trophy prisoner and openly abused, an international campaign to award him the Nobel Peace Prize was mounted. Feeling the pressure, in 1936 the government moved him out of prison into a hospital. He won the Nobel.

Yet, as Hitler solidified his grip within Germany, and as he steered war strategy toward brazen confrontations, conquering most of Europe by 1941, foreign opinion mattered less and less. All prisoner releases were banned and able inmates worked to death in the “Annihilation Work” programme. SS higher-ups and guards felt the license to unleash a pandemonium of sadism. Increasingly, Jews became the preferred scapegoat. That so many resisters of Nazism were Jews was seen as verification of a link between them and the “deviance” of “Jewish Bolshevism.” As Wachsmann puts it, “Radical anti-Semitism was part of the Camp SS code, a wild mix of traditional prejudice, racial mania, perverse fantasies, and political paranoia.” Upon arrival, guards began either to send them directly from the train to the gas chambers or cat-

egorise them to accentuate inferior status by requiring the six-sided star badge. Anti-semitic ritual humiliation, maltreatment, and violence proliferated. 1941 was the year the KL stepped over the line, from killing the disabled and infirm because they were useless to slaughtering thousands of Soviet POWs. Calculated extermination of the Jewish population followed.

We might ask: How is such history relevant to this moment? Hollander and Wachsmann both highlight the prominence of ambiguity, uncertainty, and disorientation that reigns for victims and perpetrators as circumstances unfold. Given our current situation, we might do well to recall the old saw so popular during the anti-nuclear movement of the 1980s: If a frog is thrown into boiling water, it will jump out; but if the frog is placed in cold water that is brought gradually to a boil, it won't notice and will be cooked unknowingly.

If we can apply lessons learned from similar or metaphoric predicaments of the past, we might just become driven less by the vicissitudes of disorientation and fear and more grounded in reality. Albeit, without a crystal ball, the most crucial question remains as unanswered as it did for people of the past. How much can President Trump and his accomplices achieve on this express flight to dismantling democratic balances, uninhibited industrialisation, hyper-militarism, social-service demolition, economic austerity, and license to murder the planet? One of Hollander's points is that when we break out of our numbing and reject our helplessness by actively mobilising the resistance, we become less fearful, more resilient to future difficulties, and more alive. **CT**

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One of Hollander's points is that when we break out of our numbing and reject our helplessness by actively mobilising the resistance, we become less fearful, more resilient to future difficulties, and more alive

How Big Tobacco wrote the post-truth rulebook

How public relations and big money use controversy and tell lies in their efforts to sway public opinion. A warning from the '50s by **Karen Evans-Reeves**

How were the cigarette companies going to stop smokers from giving up? The answer: The most creative and well-resourced public relations campaign ever seen

After three chaotic months as president of the United States, Donald Trump is widely credited with rewriting the political rule book. We are witnessing Trump's new era of post-fact politics, where distraction and obfuscation are central, and critical stories are dismissed as "fake news."

Thousands of column inches have analysed the new president. The Guardian calls him "a master of distraction." Rolling Stone argues he has "stoked chaos" by creating "hurricanes of misdirection." But while his leadership style has been criticised for being chaotic and made up on the hoof, we have actually seen it all before: It comes straight from the tobacco industry's cynical playbook.

Let's go back to mid-December 1953, to the New York Plaza Hotel, where a meeting took place between the presidents of four of the largest tobacco companies in the US and John Hill, founder of public relations company Hill and Knowlton (H&K).

The tobacco industry was in crisis. Three years earlier, in the UK, two esteemed epidemiologists, Richard Doll and Austin Bradford Hill, had published a paper on a causal link between smoking and cancer. And then, Reader's Digest, at the time the world's most read publication, ran an article entitled "Cancer by the carton," taking the scientific findings mainstream.

How were these companies going to stop

smokers from giving up? The answer: The most creative and well-resourced public relations campaign ever seen. The PR strategy devised at the Plaza in 1953 was all about a two-pronged public relations campaign in order to "get the industry out of a hole," and to "stop public panic." One memo outlined: "There is only one problem – confidence, and how to establish it; public assurance, and how to create it."

By January 1954, the industry had published "A Frank Statement" in 448 media publications across the US, reaching 43-million people. The statement cast doubt on the science linking smoking with ill health and pledged to smokers that it would create the (now defunct) Tobacco Industry Research Committee, hiring the best scientists to get to the truth. What it did not say was that the committee would support "almost without exception, projects which are not related directly to smoking and lung cancer." Obfuscation and diversion were key to the strategy, as were "alternative facts."

The ensuing campaign to deny any health impact from smoking would last for decades and be replicated by the fossil fuel companies and some in the food and drink industry. Despite heavy criticism, these methods are still in play today from politicians speaking about climate change to Trump and Brexit.

Throughout the second half of the 20th



CANCER FOR CHRISTMAS!: Old ads proclaim the virtues of smoking



-century, the tobacco industry, guided by the PR gurus at H&K, was learning to divert attention all the time. In 1968, an executive from H&K reiterated the best media angles for the industry magazine, Tobacco and Health Research: “The most important type of story is that which casts doubt in the cause and effect theory of disease and smoking. Eye-grabbing headlines should strongly call out the point – Controversy! Contradiction! Other Factors! Unknowns!”

The following year, one now well-quoted internal memo from Brown and Williamson, a subsidiary of British American Tobacco (BAT), outlined how: “Doubt is our product since it is the best way of competing with the ‘body of fact’ that exists in the mind of the public. It is also the means of establishing a controversy.”

The industry kept the controversy alive by sowing doubt. There was “no substantial evidence,” “no clinical evidence.” The debate was “unresolved” and “still open” as nothing had been “statistically proven” or “scientifically established.” There was “no

scientific proof.” It was clinical and cynical. “A demand for scientific proof is always a formula for inaction and delay and usually the first reaction of the guilty,” conceded the head of research at British and American Tobacco) BAT in 1976.

Another way was to seek alternative facts. In 1970, Helmut Wakeham, head of research and development of Philip Morris, wrote: “Let’s face it. We are interested in evidence which we believe denies the allegations that cigarette smoking causes disease.”

Nine years later, in 1979, Trump purchased an 11-story property which would become Trump Tower, just three minutes’ walk from the New York Plaza. By now, the industry was also denying the evidence of the health harms of secondhand smoke. Once again, the industry set up organisations to conduct research and divert attention away from the truth. To further confuse the debate, it set up front groups which acted on its behalf

“The most important type of story is that which casts doubt in the cause and effect theory of disease and smoking. Eye-grabbing headlines should strongly call out the point – Controversy! Contradiction! Other Factors! Unknowns!”

Word Play

Live transmission of rabble-rousing speeches is no longer a one-off because they have another life on social media. Short clips or even lengthy extracts are uploaded on to a multitude of platforms, and often reach an audience via the internet that far exceeds that of the original live broadcast

and smokers' rights organisations to promote industry arguments.

Trump Tower was finished in 1984, the year that forms the title of George Orwell's famous novel. This novel depicted a dystopian future of censorship, Big Brother and manipulated truth.

The public began to understand the true level of the tobacco industry's own manipulated truth via the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement, which forced previously private internal documents to be made public. The legal ruling forced the closure of the Tobacco Industry Research Committee, which was described as an example of "a sophisticated public relations vehicle based on the premise of conducting independent scientific research – to deny the harms of smoking and reassure the public."

In 2004, the year Trump and his tower gained notoriety in the popular television series *The Apprentice*, research by the UK epidemiologist Sir Richard Doll estimated that, during the industry's 50-year denial campaign, six-million people had been killed by tobacco in the UK alone.

Since its internal workings were exposed in the 1990s, the tobacco industry has tried to reposition itself as responsible, as the corporate and political playbook evolves. But whereas once the tobacco industry courted scientists, both the Brexiteers and Trump have been quick to attack experts.

"People in this country have had enough of experts," said Michael Gove at the height of the British Brexit campaign.

Now Trump and his advisers seem to have taken the playbook to a new level. After a row over the size of his inauguration crowd, Trump's advisor Kellyanne Conway was widely criticised for using the term "alternative facts." Her use of the term has spawned its own Wikipedia page, which notes "the phrase was extensively described as Orwellian." By January 26, 2017, sales of the book *Nineteen Eighty-Four* had increased by 9,500 percent, which *The New York Times* and others attributed to Conway's use of the phrase.

However, the industry got there first. Brown and Williamson even developed a cigarette brand called "Fact," which allowed it to twist the language of smoking and health, and an advertising agency developed "current fact" and "alternative fact concepts."

"Is Fact a safer cigarette?" asked one document from the 1970s. "Critics of smoking claim that cigarettes are dangerous. We don't agree . . . That's not a claim. That's a fact." **CT**

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America, the beautiful!

CJ Hopkins tells how the country transformed itself into a scared society of security-minded petty officials, policing each other around the clock

Given the unbelievable amount of preposterous neo-McCarthyite hysteria that the corporate-owned media has been pumping out in a last-ditch effort to convince the public that Donald Trump is a Russian operative, you might have missed the revolting video of a TSA officer at the Dallas/Forth Worth Airport extensively groping a 13-year-old boy as his TSA supervisor, a couple of cops, the boy's horrified mother, and others looked on. If you haven't watched it yet, you probably should, as there really isn't a better illustration of what the United States has become over the course of the past 15 years. What you will witness is an exercise in psychological and physical humiliation, a demonstration of the power of the "authorities" to violate our most intimate boundaries, technically with our cooperation.

If you've ever been arrested, or served time in prison, or some indefinite detention facility in Cuba, you're familiar with this kind of thing. Humiliation (ie, the production of shame) is a basic domination tactic. It is one of the most effective means of establishing and maintaining control over people. This is why, when the police arrest you (for protesting outside the cages they've thoughtfully provided for you to blow off steam in, or for being black on Tuesday, or whatever), before they put you in a holding cell, they normally like to make you strip, bend over,



When the police arrest you, before they put you in a holding cell, they normally like to make you strip, bend over, and spread your ass cheeks for them, and lift your scrotum if you have one

and spread your ass cheeks for them, and lift your scrotum if you happen to have one. They don't really think you've been walking around with a ten-inch Bowie knife hidden up your rectum, or a razor blade super-glued behind your testicles. They just need to thoroughly humiliate you and show you that they control your body. This, of course, is also the motive for the "rectal rehydration and feeding procedures" (otherwise known as anal rape) used on the prisoners in Guantanamo Bay, and the sadistic sexual

Hands Off

I stand there, just like you, and get fondled by the TSA whenever I'm back in the USA. And I submit to the somewhat less invasive but no less absurd routines here in Europe

humiliation enjoyed by our troops in Abu Ghraib prison, and (yes, obviously, to a lesser degree) the utterly degrading “security procedures” that most people now routinely submit to as a prelude to their family holidays.

The purpose of these sadistic procedures is to systematically humiliate people, to strip them of their personal autonomy, to rub their faces in their utter powerlessness, over and over and over again, until, finally, out of desperation, in an effort to recover some shred of autonomy, they begin to misperceive their powerlessness as cowardice, and are overwhelmed by shame. This is one of the better tricks that agents of authoritarian systems and twisted control freaks of every type play on their victims to render them compliant. It works just as well for parents, teachers, and abusive husbands as it does for cops. The steps of the process are fairly simple:

First, you need to establish actual physical power over whoever you're controlling so they can't just walk away from your abuse. Then, you humiliate them, over and over, physically, psychologically, sexually, however seems most appropriate for your victim. They will want to fight back, but they won't be able to, because you're their parent, or their boss, or a prison guard, or a duly-sworn agent of the federal government. They won't succumb to shame right away, so you'll have to keep at the humiliation until they accept that resistance is futile (and that no matter how much they try to please you, you're just going to keep humiliating them), and they begin to totally lose their minds. At which point, you can sit back and watch as the resentment they had been harbouring toward you (and the blame they had been assigning to you) is turned inward on themselves in a desperate attempt to preserve some semblance of individual autonomy . . . which, of course, they won't even realise they're doing.

Once that's all done, and they are emotionally crippled, and shuffling around like

medieval penitents blaming themselves for their unfocused rage and more-or-less constant low-level depression, you can pretty much do whatever you want with them, because no matter what kind of totally meaningless, soul-crushing job you give them to do, or completely hopeless future you offer them, or ridiculous, self-abasing rituals you force them to perform for your amusement, they are going to remain obedient and cooperative.

Say, for example, you need them to stand in line at the airport for several hours (having put all their fluids in little plastic bottles and sealed them in a transparent Ziplock bag), and take off their shoes, belts, and hats, and place them in a separate bin (ie, not the one for phones and laptops, and definitely not unbinned on the belt), and then allow your agents to grope their genitals, or better yet, their children's genitals, no worries, they'll be happy to comply. Or maybe (again, this just an example) you need them to back the invasion or bombing of some foreign country they know nothing about, which poses no threat to them whatsoever, because you're trying to restructure the entire Middle East . . . or perhaps, having botched a presidential election and allowed some uncouth, unvetted, billionaire to defeat your chosen corporate puppet and actually take up residence in the White House, you need them (these people whose spirits you've broken) to believe your screw-up was a Russian conspiracy to overthrow the entire “free world,” and that anyone who didn't vote for your candidate was being mind-controlled by Russian bots and . . . well, I think you get the idea.

Now, in case you think I'm mocking you or someone you know and love, personally, I'm not. I stand there, just like you, and get fondled by the TSA whenever I'm back in the USA. And I submit to the somewhat less invasive but no less absurd routines here in Europe. It's not like we have a choice or anything, those of us who don't own private jets. And sifting through all the propaganda

disseminated by the six corporations that own the majority of the American media is a job most people do not have time for (and one, ideally, they shouldn't have to do), so I'm not passing judgment on anyone.

My point is, look at what we've become . . . Americans, I mean. What happened to us? When did we become this nation of authority-worshipping, order-following, propaganda-parroting conformists? Or were we, deep down, always this way, despite our individualist mythology? Certainly, there's more than enough evidence in our history to support the latter proposition.

And yet, as late as the 1960s, when I was being raised (ie, socially conditioned), the mythic image of American-ness was inextricably linked to rebellion, nonconformity, disobedience, and a generally anarchic Wild West mentality that regarded all forms of authority as suspect. Yes, I realise that that mythic image was part and parcel of our capitalist conditioning, but it also inspired a good deal of rebellion (actual rebellion, as opposed to the kind of corporate-sponsored, party-orchestrated "resistance" we've been getting of late). Somewhere, inside all the John Wayne malarkey, mixed up together with our wanton brutality, and our racism, and all our other ugly aspects, was something else . . . something beautiful. Some essentially wild and ungovernable spirit, which had something to do with individual autonomy, and the land, and the chance to escape the prison of class in European society, and jazz, and rock and roll, and horses, and that was celebrated in movies like *Cool Hand Luke*, and in novels like *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. I can only imagine how Kesey is being treated in universities these days, given McMurphy's political incorrectness and the pecking party much of the left has become. Not that it's any better on the right, where a similarly pathetic herd men-

tality is being fostered by frightened neo-nationalists who believe that the "American way of life" is under threat from Mexicans, Muslims, and transvestites who want to pee in their bathrooms.

The thing that alarms me most of all is the tendency (on both sides of the political spectrum) to criminalise, pathologise, and otherwise punish any behaviour that doesn't strictly conform to whatever one's concept of "normal" is. But this is what happens when you break people's spirits. You turn them into little mirror images of the authoritarian system they live in. What you end up with is a society of cops, policing each other around the clock. It's like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, except with various opposing species of finger-pointing, screeching aliens walking around in human skins, scrutinising everyone for signs of deviance from the uniformity of thought and action that they, having surrendered to it themselves, desperately want to impose on the rest of us.

Back when I was still writing stage plays, before the simulated aristocracy that subsidises most of the English-language theatre figured out I was just fucking with them, I wrote one dealing with all this stuff. The title of the play is *America, the Beautiful*. It takes place in a detention room in an airport somewhere in the USA. Unlike many of my previous plays, it will never, ever, be produced in America, or the UK, or probably anywhere else. I wrote it way back in 2006, but, sadly, it's just as relevant today. You can download a PDF from the link below, if you're curious. Before you do, though, I need to warn you, it gets extremely disturbing at the end. There's a rather graphic depiction of the type of humiliating procedures I referred to above. And if that wasn't inappropriate enough, one of the players actually smokes a cigarette. So there's your official trigger warning. **CT**

When did we become this nation of authority-worshipping, order-following, propaganda-parroting conformists? Or were we, deep down, always this way, despite our individualist mythology?

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Download the script to the play, *America, the Beautiful* at

<https://cjhopkinswebsite.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/america-the-beautiful.pdf>

Thatcher, Reagan and Robin Hood

A history of modern wealth inequality, by **Andrew Newell**

Arguably the most important aspects that directly affected income inequality were state involvement in wage setting and redistributive taxes and transfers

Persistently high rates of income or wealth inequality are bad for social cohesion, political inclusion and crime. The evidence for this is overwhelming. Often, stubbornly high income inequality partly reflects deep historical injustice. Fortunately, history also provides some clues to how we might tackle it.

In some Western advanced countries income inequality is a lot higher than it was 37 years ago. In 1980 it had been stable and low in the UK for three decades. The period after World War II was one of inclusive economic growth. This Golden Age of low inequality is a reference period for many of us: it is when we grew up. But few can now remember the times that led to it. The 1930s are too long ago.

The statistical record on inequality before the 1950s is quite thin, though research is continuing to improve it. We are fairly certain that income inequality fell and stayed low in most Western countries roughly between 1910 and 1980. What made it fall? Of course there was more than one cause, and surely different causes in different places. But some common features are present.

In the earlier years of the 20th-century there was a clear trend of state intervention in the economy, albeit institutionalised differently across countries. It was generated by a mix of factors: social solidarity engen-

dered by the wars, wartime experience of governing the economy, unemployment in the 1930s and the rise of socialist ideas. It accelerated for a decade or so after World War II.

Key features were nationalisation, increased provision of welfare, public health and education, and the development of public amenities. Scholars have discerned regional variants: the Nordic Model, Rhine capitalism and so on. Arguably the most important aspects that directly affected income inequality were state involvement in wage setting and redistributive taxes and transfers.

Centralised bargaining

In many countries there were moves to centralise collective bargaining over wages and conditions of work. In the UK, wages councils which controlled wages in low pay sectors were introduced in 1909, and national wage setting was introduced during both world wars. From 1945, government-imposed ceilings on pay rises, agreed with unions and employers, were in place much of the time until 1979.

In other countries the process was different. In Sweden, national level bargaining between employers' federations and unions was agreed initially in 1938 to avoid government intervention. In West Germany after World War II, employers' confederations

and unions were restructured along industry lines and wage bargaining took place nationally, by industry. In France, unions and employers' organisations, together with government, were brought together in Le Conseil Economique in 1946.

You are getting the picture by now. Even in the US, the Treaty of Detroit of 1945 created a tripartite system aimed at maintaining industrial peace. Moderation and duty were virtues to be applauded.

Historians record how in the 1960s the White House might publicly criticise executives granting themselves large pay rises. In the 1970s this interventionist tendency was criticised, with some justification, as being a partial cause of the stagflation of that decade.

By the mid-1980s the political mood had shifted, particularly strongly in the UK and US. The new mood in those countries was anti-interventionist, especially in industrial relations. Both President Ronald Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher faced down unions rather than seeking compromise. In Britain the institutions of consultation were wound up. In the US, minimum wages were allowed to fall against average earnings.

Inequality in labour earnings rose quickly though the 1980s in both countries. The trend was slower in the rest of Western Europe where, mainly, the wage setting institutions remained more intact. Most commentators argue that the inequality rise was due to the slow-moving forces of technological change and globalisation which favoured skilled and educated workers. But, in the UK and US, the shift in political climate meant that the wage setting institutions no longer worked to moderate those forces.

Revenue source

Taxation was changing as well. In most Western countries, income tax became a major revenue source in the early 20th-century. As the political tide changed, both Reagan and Thatcher heavily reduced the progressivity

of income tax – the extent to which the rate of taxation increases with income.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) calculates the extent to which taxes and transfer payments moderate income inequality in its member countries. Their calculations illustrate what economic historian Peter Lindert calls the Robin Hood Paradox, which is that the highest levels of redistribution occur in countries with the least pre-tax inequality. For instance, among OECD countries, the highest levels of redistribution occur in the Scandinavian countries and the lowest in Mexico and Chile.

Can we infer from this that redistribution works? Could the Mexican government eliminate massive inequality with deep historical roots simply by increasing the progressivity of taxes and transfers? Their Progres and Prospera programmes have made cash transfers to the poor conditional on them ensuring their children attend school and that the family receive preventative health care. Analysis of these programmes tell us they work well.

There is also international evidence that increases in tax and transfer progressivity do reduce income inequality directly. My own calculations have shown that changes in progressivity and changes in income inequality across the OECD countries 2007-2014 are strongly negatively correlated.

This message of the last hundred years is unfashionable. In Britain and the US few political parties today with serious electoral ambitions would embrace a collectivist approach to the setting of wages and salaries or increasing tax and transfer progressivity. Even fewer would speak out against high salaries. Fashions do change, though. **CT**

Mexico's Progres and Prospera programmes have made cash transfers to the poor conditional on them ensuring their children attend school and that the family receive preventative health care

Andrew Newell is a professor of economics at the University of Sussex in England. This article has been co-published with the World Economic Forum and was first published at www.theconversation.com

Survivor



Antonius Wiriadaja was struck by a random bullet as he walked down a crowded Brooklyn street. The intended target was the ex-girlfriend of the shooter. Brooklyn, New York, 2013

Gun violence is a strangely American phenomenon, an head-clutching insanity that the country's lawmakers seem unable – unwilling even – to curtail. Those of us just a few miles north of the US border in Canada scratch our heads in amazed bewilderment as our neighbours just a few kilometres across the border blast each other to oblivion with the enthusiasm we reserve for playing hockey on winter ice ponds.

But, as we all contemplate the anguish and the mourning created by senseless shooting, we often tend to lose sight of those who didn't die – the gunshot survivors who have to live in irreversibly-seared torment of missing limbs and shattered lives in the aftermath of what is often a moment's madness.

Kathy Shorr has been there. But she was one of the lucky ones. She survived an at-

doors



tack by armed intruders at her New York home, when two men dressed as postmen forced their way into the house and burgled it, threatening Shorr and her daughter with a gun.

Her nightmare had become reality: “I know what it feels like to have a gun pointed at you and the person closest to you,” Shorr recalls. “That’s a feeling that you never want to experience again, and you don’t wish on

anybody. It’s a complete loss of control over your life, and somebody else taking that control.”

“Later,” says Shorr, in the preface to her new book, **Shot: 101 Survivors of Gun Violence in America**, “as a high school teacher in an urban public school, I would often see teens wearing necklaces with laminated photographs of friends and family members killed by guns – victims who had

Stopped at a red light, Mariam Pare was struck in the neck when a bullet ripped through the seat of the car she was driving. Left a quadriplegic.

Richmond, Virginia;
1995

Survivors

Police sergeant **Jon Brough** was hit in the face by a wanted man who had just murdered two people. The sergeant's face shield malfunctioned and he was blinded by the bullet. Belleville, Illinois, 2006



James Armstrong lost the lower part of his leg after talking to a rowdy guest at a birthday party. The guest, a former military man, returned to the party, placed a shotgun on Armstrong's calf and fired. Bozeman, Montana, 2013



“Bad things often happen in normal places”

become ‘folk’ heroes in neighbourhoods decimated by shootings. My thoughts focused on the others – the survivors of gun violence. Where were their tributes? “Who thought of their trauma?”

“I wanted to give a human face to an issue that affects all Americans through documenting the injuries sustained by real people. At a time when we seem to talk at each other rather than to each other, we need to find ways the dialogue on gun safety can lead to a constructive resolution.”

At the end of 2013, Shorr travelled around the United States photographing survivors of

shootings. Her photographs embody all races and many ethnicities, with ages from eight to 80. Both high- and low-profile incidents are represented. Many of them are (or were) gun owners, and there’s even an NRA (National Rifle Association) member, who survived because of his licensed gun, in the project.

“Most of the survivors,” she writes, “were photographed where they were shot. These locations are familiar to everyone, as bad things often happen in normal places. Many were shot inside their cars or in their homes, and others at the gym, church, shopping centre, movie theatre, or on the street in

Survivors

College student **Chris Harris** was struck four times while sitting in his car when a neighbourhood acquaintance was trying to rob him. Harris also lost a leg in the shooting. New Castle, Delaware, 2015



Ryan Carney was sitting in his car talking with his ex-girlfriend, when he was hit in the hand by a bullet. He lost one finger and is crippled in two others. Atlantic City, New Jersey, 2014



their neighbourhood, and on public transportation – random or intentional, all are part of the story of gun violence.”

Shot is an important book, highlighting the darkest moments in the lives of 101 innocent people, whose only link is the fact that they happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. The lesson we take away from their experiences should be as clear to every gun-toting citizen in the United States as it is to those of us who live in Canada and other enlightened countries: Guns are a curse on a civilised society.

— **Tony Sutton**



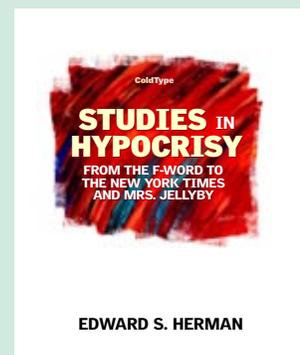
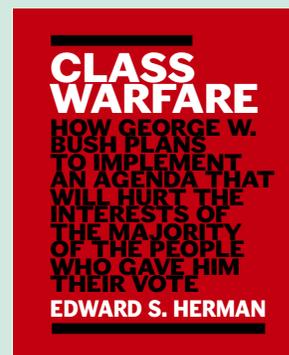
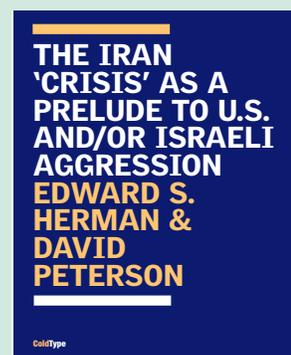
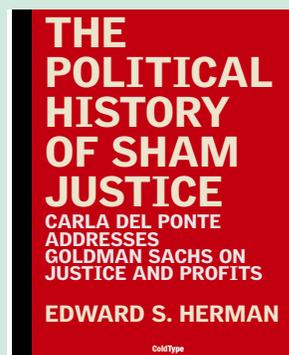
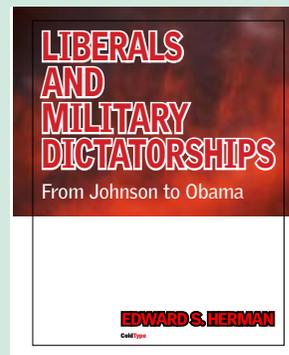
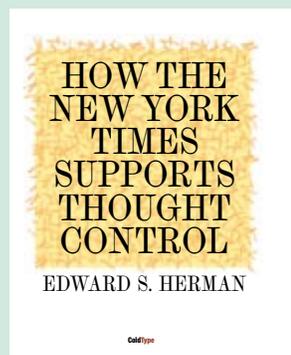
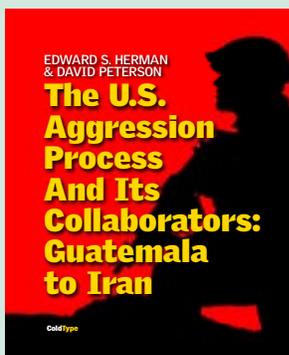
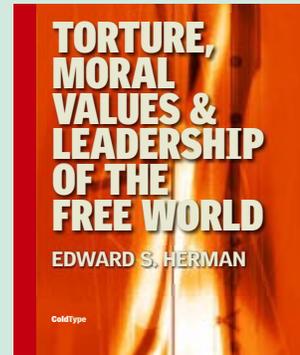
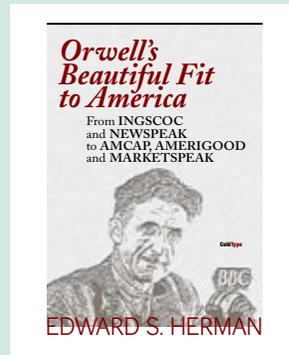
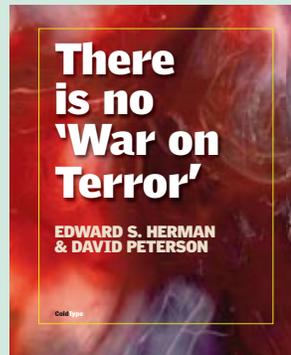
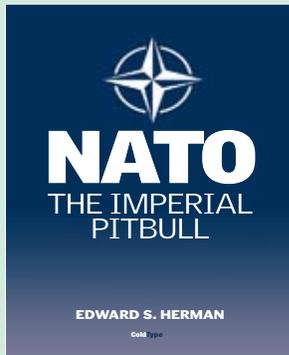
SHOT
101 Survivors of Gun
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ColdType Insights

Crediting the corporate war machine

If we're going to give our military contractors so much cash, writes **Tom Engelhardt**, let's give them the credit they deserve

Let's skip the obvious. Leave aside, for instance, the way Donald Trump's decision to launch 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles against a Syrian air base is but another example of what we already know: that acts of war are now the prerogative, and only the prerogative, of the president (or of military commanders whom Trump has given greater authority to act on their own). Checks, balances? I doubt either of them applies anymore when it comes to war, American-style. These days, the only checks written are to the Pentagon and "balance" isn't a concept outside of gymnastics.

Meanwhile, Donald Trump has learned that every wild defeat at home, every swirling palace intrigue that would make a tsar blush, can be . . . well, trumped by dumping 59 cruise missiles or their equivalent in some distant land to save the "beautiful babies." (Forget the babies "his" generals have been killing.) Launch the missiles, send in the raiders, dispatch the planes, and you'll get everyone you ever tweet-smashed – including Hillary, John, Nancy, Marco, and

Chuck to applaud you and praise your acts. They'll be joined by the official right wing (though not the unofficial one), while the neocons and their pals will hail you as the Churchill of the 21st-century. Or at least, all of this will be true until – consult George W. Bush and Barack Obama on this – it isn't; until the day after; until, you know, the



Tomahawk missile Photo: Wikipedia

moment we've experienced over and over during the last 15 years of American war-making, the one where it suddenly becomes clear (yet again) that things are going really, really wrong.

While we wait, here's a suggestion that came to mind as I read the latest thoughts of TomDispatch regular retired Air Force Lieutenant Colonel William Astore (*see Pages 16 to 20 of this issue*) on the military-industrial complex in the age

of Trump: Isn't it time to give the corporate sponsorship of war its just due? After all, there's hardly an object, building, museum, stadium, or event in civilian life these days that doesn't have corporate sponsorship plastered all over it and built into it. In my hometown, for instance, baseball's New York Mets play at Citi Field, while football's Giants and Jets spend their seasons at MetLife Stadium. Given the role that America's giant weapons makers play in our wars, and the stunningly successful way they spread their wares around the planet, isn't it time for the growing war powers of the commander-in-chief to be translated into a militarised version of sponsorship?

Shouldn't Raytheon, the maker of those 59 cruise missiles that Donald Trump used recently, be given full credit so that media coverage of the event would refer to the Raytheon Syrian Tomahawk Chop? Shouldn't the next set of drone attacks in Yemen be called the General Atomics MQ-9 Reaper Harvesting? Shouldn't any future strikes by the most expensive weapons system on this or any other planet be labelled the Lockheed F-35 Lightning Joint Strike Fighter Storm? We're in a new age of corporate enhancement. Isn't it time for war to adjust and for the military-industrial complex to get the credit it so richly deserves? **CT**

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Tom Engelhardt is the editor of www.tomdispatch.com

Israel packs seven lies into one statement

Amitai Ben-Abba checks out a misguided memo from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Responding to international concerns with respect to the massive hunger strike held by Palestinian prisoners, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared: “*The Palestinian prisoners are not political prisoners. They are convicted terrorists and murderers. They were brought to justice and are treated properly under international law.*”

There are no less than seven misrepresentations in this statement:

1. Not political prisoners?

In fact, the Israeli Prison Service (IPS) makes a clear distinction between Palestinians imprisoned on criminal charges and those imprisoned for “security” – or in other words “political” – reasons, including entirely separate prisons for each category.

2. Terrorists?

Terrorism is, of course, a floating signifier, a word used by one party to undermine another, and used by Israeli officials to describe pretty much everything they dislike (the New York Times, for example, was accused of “journalistic terrorism” for publishing Marwan Barghouti’s op-ed). As pointed out endlessly before, isn’t the bombing of a defenceless civilian population, such as the repeated airstrikes on Gaza, nothing short of terrorism?



Marwan Barghouti Photo: Thierry Ermann

3. Murderers?

This term is used to dehumanise the hunger strikers, as even the IPS confirms that only 12 percent of security prisoners were convicted of crimes related to the loss of human life. Furthermore, the competence of Israel’s legal system in convicting Palestinians of such charges is contested, as Israel officially does not offer West Bank residents a fair trial (more on this below). Most convicted Palestinian security offenders are incarcerated based on political activity, including membership in “illegal organisations” (this includes the ruling party Fatah, a group the IDF coordinates with daily). Of Palestinian children arrested, a majority are convicted of

non-lethal stone-throwing, a charge for which they can face up to 20 years in prison.

4. Brought to justice?

Israel regularly holds hundreds of detainees without trial and hundreds of political prisoners under administrative detention for undetermined periods of times without disclosing their allegations.

5. Justice?!

Israel judges Palestinians in what could best be described as an apartheid legal system, under which an incompetent military court imprisons Palestinians in a staggering 99.74 percent conviction rate according to the IDF’s figures. This means virtually any Palestinian is guaranteed to be convicted of literally any crime. The word “Justice” is simply Kafkaesque in this context.

6. Treated properly?

In fact, Palestinian prisoners are routinely subject to maltreatment in many forms, including physical and psychological torture, prevention of medical treatment, prevention of lawyer and family visits and so on and so forth. In fact, if Israel will decide to abide by international law, it might allow for the current hunger strike to end.

7. International Law?

As revealed by the court during Marwan Barghouti’s trial, the Fourth Geneva Convention has never been introduced into Israeli domestic law, and as reaffirmed by the UN Security Council last December, Israel is in direct violation of international law.

In this light, the current scandal

befalling the New York Times for publishing the op-ed of a so-called terrorist appears as no more than a media spin meant to stir public attention away from the concrete and reasonable demands made by the Palestinian prisoners. The seven falsehoods above make it all the more important to listen directly to the people who bear the cost of resistance. To me this comes particularly close to heart, as today I walked my sister Atalya Ben-Abba to another prison term after 50 days on the inside for refusing to serve the

Israeli military. I do not commonly identify with politicians and public figures, but I am touched by Marwan Barghouti's honest words, and by the glaring contrast that emerges when juxtaposed with those of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs above:

"Our chains will be broken before we are, because it is human nature to heed the call for freedom regardless of the cost." **CT**

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Amitai Ben-Abba writes the *Clownmonkey* blog at www.radicalmonkeyclown.wordpress.com

mission. The union leader, a veteran of 1930s vintage, scoffed. He'd seen it often. My fellow organiser felt rebuffed, but his point was: workers are going to encounter much worse and must learn to deal with these attacks themselves, to build their strength.

The way that working people – by which I mean those who depend on jobs to support themselves, versus living off investments, interest, rent etc – the way workers found to protect their interests over a period of about 150 years, was by uniting in what were called unions to assert their rights. This was agency.

The counterattack by the owning class in recent decades has been targeted at undermining those unions. It's been the most significant effect of free trade deals. By moving jobs to cheaper markets, such as Mexico or China, employers pressured unions to ratchet down demands and concede gains they'd made. Eventually workers ask, "What do we need these unions for if all they do is cave?" Then along comes Universal BI, Guaranteed BI, or some cognate.

The very governments and sectors that imposed and insisted on those debilitating trade deals, now rise up and say: Worry not, we will restore your declining security, which threatens to plunge you into need and onto welfare, with a guaranteed basic income. The one thing you won't get back, it's true, is your sense of agency and power, which you'd achieved to some extent through your unions. But your "basics" will now, through our benevolence, be covered.

The problem with this isn't only the absence of agency and dignity but, as Kipnis says about the abuse

A basic guaranteed income? Humbug!

Ignore 'gifts' from the ruling class, by organising against inequality and creating your own future, writes **Rick Salutin**

Something about the Guaranteed Basic Income programme being readied for a Canadian test run in Ontario – names vary, but it means automatic minimum support for the needy and eventually everyone – irritates me. And yes, that makes me feel Dickensian: Humbug!

Let me, without much justification, start somewhere else: sexual abuse at universities. In her book, *Unwanted Advances: Sexual Paranoia Comes to Campus*, US academic Laura Kipnis acknowledges the problem – the plague really – but deplors the perils of a bureaucratic, judicialised response.

She documents much abuse in the name of dealing with abuse. Yet

what most worries her is what a reviewer called a "crisis of agency" among young women. If they leave their protection to recently minted campus officials and offices – after registering their complaints – it may reduce them to passive victimhood, awaiting outside rescuers: "There's an excess of masculine power in the world, and women have to be educated to contest it in real time ..."

Now agency is agency and passivity is passivity, though they come in many guises. When I organised with a textile union in the 1970s, another organiser reported a young worker's experience of sexual innuendo being spread about her by company stooges. The organiser wanted to go to Ontario's Human Rights Com-

of young women: they can't just wait around "for men to reach some new stage of heightened consciousness" because that day may never come.

And what if the owning and renting classes simply view a BI as another source to be scarfed up through higher rents, charges, privatised highways etc, so it ends up merely expanding the gulf between the rich and the rest? (I'm indebted for this argument to economist Michael Hudson.)

Take Kathleen Wynne's privatisation of hydro. Of course electricity costs will rise once the financiers take over, why else would they buy it except to profit as much as they can? So the GBI just gets recycled back up to those who made it necessary in the first place. The inequality gulf worsens and is financed largely by taxes from people who can't ever get ahead of it. Arrggh!

What's the alternative? Not nec-

essarily unions, but agency in some form. Take control of your destiny – both because it's more fun than the alternative and because you can't trust anyone else to. Organise somehow – unions, political parties, whatever – to get a seat at the same table as those guys with the investments and returns have done forever. Charity is always a way to confirm who's on top and who's stuck below – and a guaranteed BI is essentially charity.

Would I vote for it? Maybe, as a desperate stopgap measure. People have to survive. But I wouldn't stop skulking around, conniving and contriving a way to contest power, not just gratefully accept its ambiguous droppings. **CT**

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Rick Salutin is a social activist and author. This article originally appeared in the Toronto Star, where he writes a weekly column.

Syrians did not do the attack. Never mind that the idea that an Assad regime, on the verge of winning its long war against the jihadists, would have any incentive to do this is absurd. Never mind that all the government's reserves of poisonous gas were destroyed over the last several years under international supervision.

You see, I'm nuts . . . and the people that listen to coverage led by people at the New York Times such as Michael Gordon and David Sanger, or by Tom "the Transcriber" Bowman at NPR who never saw an official US military/intelligence line they didn't swallow whole and who ginned up the public with groundless rumours to make the invasion of Iraq seem reasonable, are. Of course, very very sane.

Why am I so happy to be nuts?

Because, to paraphrase Fidel Castro, history has already absolved my madness several times over.

You see, in the lead up to the invasion of Iraq (we're talking Fall 2002 and early 2003) I was telling everyone I knew that there were no weapons of mass destruction and that it was all a pretext for the destruction of Iraq. How did I know? Because I was reading the people mentioned above and others like them beside the yellow journalism of the New York Times and NPR.

I was nuts also in 2008 when I said to anyone who'd listen and in contradiction to what everyone "knew" to be true that the conflict between Russia and Georgia had not been started by Russia but rather the US asset and Georgian president Sakashvili; I even published an article pointing this out in the heat of the war in August of that year. As you will recall the "reality" of the brutal "Russian attack" on Georgia ran wild throughout the 2008

I may be nuts, but at least I'm awake

It pays to be a skeptic in this modern world of official and media lies and obfuscation, writes **Thomas S. Harrington**

Everyone, and I mean everyone, is taking for a given that Assad bombed the people of his own country with sarin gas the other week. However, I'm pretty sure, in fact, I'm almost positive, that the poisoning of those poor people did not happen they way we have been told it did.

That makes me nuts, or it at least puts me in that fringe of people spout-

ing that most dreaded of things in the mainstream mind: a conspiracy theorist. Never mind that that people with a record of truth-telling who also happen to have excellent contacts within the highest levels of the US security establishment, people like Robert Parry, Larry Wilkerson, Philip Giraldi, Patrick Lang and Ray McGovern are saying flat out that the

presidential campaign, pushed assiduously by McCain and unchallenged by the mainstream press. Then came the OSCE report several months later which said that Russia had been attacked by Georgia. No one, of course, apologised for what they had said and the consequences it had unleashed.

I was also nuts in 2013 when I said right off the bat that there is no way that Assad was behind the gassing of rebel territory in Ghouta. While the politicians and the lackeys in the mainstream media have continued to repeat as uncontested fact this rendering of events, this thesis has been thoroughly debunked by many of the intelligence experts listed above, and perhaps more significantly the best

and least corruptible reporter remaining in the US – Seymour Hersh. It has also been debunked scientifically by Theodore Postol at MIT, a leading expert on missile trajectories. His conclusion is that there was no way the rocket carrying the gas could have come from government-held territory.

I could go on.. But hey, I'm nuts. . . and in the current context, very proud to be so. **CT**

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Thomas S. Harrington is a professor of Hispanic Studies at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, and the author of Public Intellectuals and Nation Building in the Iberian Peninsula, 1900–1925: The Alchemy of Identity, published in 2014 by Bucknell University Press.

born 1933. Now they're waiting for me to fill in the other space."

Now we can now fill in the other space: "Wakefield Civic Society records the boyhood home of David Storey (1933-2017), rugby footballer, novelist and playwright. Much of his work reflects his years in Wakefield."

A bald statement, but true. Coal is a core element of Storey's work. His father was a miner who spent 40 years at the coalface. Mr Shaw, the father in Storey's play In Celebration (1969), tells his sons more or less what Storey's father told him and his brothers, "I've spent half my life making sure none of you went down that pit."

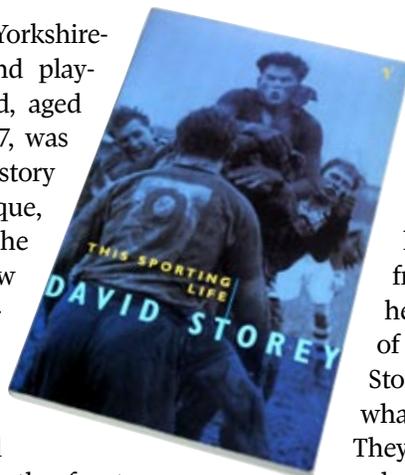
Wakefield was surrounded by pits. Manor Pit, a short walk down Westgate from Wakefield's city centre, only closed in 1982, and the town is the setting for a number of his novels and plays, including Storey's semi-autobiographical first novel, *This Sporting Life*, published in 1960 when he was 26. Aged 18, just before he went to the Slade School of Fine Art in London, he signed a 14-year contract to play rugby league for Leeds, but only played for four seasons. Travelling north for matches to earn £6 a week, he spent his time on the train writing novels, and it was his experience playing for Leeds which inspired *This Sporting Life*.

The novel, and the 1963 film adaptation, directed by Lindsay Anderson, starring Richard Harris, had a powerful impact on me, but it is the novel *Saville* (1976) that stands out. The novel centres on the life of miner's son, Colin, like Storey a grammar school boy, and it recreates in sparse, vivid, prose a

Coal mining, rugby and powerful words

Granville Williams remembers David Storey, one of the North of England's greatest authors and playwrights

David Storey, the Yorkshire-born novelist and playwright, who died, aged 83, on March 27, was fond of recalling the story about the blue plaque, installed in 2000 on the house in which he grew up in the years before World War II, "I got rung up by the Daily Express, saying, 'Have you heard about the plaque on the front of a council house in Wakefield?' It seems they'd put it on the wrong



house. And the tenant of the house was very hostile to something being fastened to his wall near his front door. He said he had never heard of fucking David Storey anyway, so what's it all about? They sorted it out, and moved the plaque from his house to the right house. It says: David Storey,

Above: Cover of *This Sporting Life*, David Storey's most-loved book

Insights

West Yorkshire mining culture and way of life which no longer exists. The former pits, including the two that Storey's father worked in, have been so well landscaped so that you'd never know there'd been any collieries.

And the same, to some extent, applies to the rugby league teams which flourished in those mining communities. In 1996, in the wake of the fiercely-resisted Rupert Murdoch-inspired Super League, Storey linked the decline of "traditional" Northern values with the collapse of the coal industry: "I used to think of rugby league as an exten-

sion of the coal mining industry, not just in terms of geography, but it has the same mechanical, repetitive process. Tackle, play-the-ball, tackle – it has a similar rhythm to chipping away at rocks. But now, of course, the coal mining has gone, and so has the confederacy that infused the game in the '50s and '60s, the camaraderie that came from a united struggle, whether it be against nature or the class system."

Storey went on a scholarship to the fee-paying Queen Elizabeth Grammar School in Wakefield, where they played the more up-

market rugby union version of the game. David Hinchcliffe, a former Wakefield MP, has a letter from Storey, in which he recalled that, when he signed as a professional with the Leeds rugby league club in 1951, the deputy head wrote to him to say that he had let the school down. This was the sort of rich material Storey's creative work drew on. **CT**

*Granville Williams is a member of the National Council of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom. His most recent book is *The Flame Still Burns: The Creative Power of Coal*.*

Balaclavas, bullshit, and a sheriff's war on crime

Just to confirm that, yes, everything you'd heard about the rapid militarisation of the police in the USA is true, along comes Sheriff Peyton C. Grimmell, of Lake County in Florida.

Posing with a band of balaclava-clad toughies which, it turns out, is his elite team of drug-busters, the wily sheriff announced in a Facebook message to local drug dealers that he and his boys were hard on their heels. "We're coming for you. As a matter of fact, our undercover agents have already bought heroin from many of you," he announced to a background of suitably-stirring music. "We are simply awaiting for the arrest warrants to be filed . . . Enjoy trying to sleep tonight wondering if tonight's the night the SWAT team blows your front door off the hinges," With that, he and his men marched off the screen . . .

"Looks like an ISIS recruitment



GOD HELP AMERICA: Sheriff Peyton C.. Grimmell and his boys. Photo: YouTube frame grab

video," said one Facebook commentator, while another added "Police need to re-learn their roles because in the end, they are not the military. Smart police use the public to gain understanding of problems, not threaten the public with mid-

night no-knock raids." On a lighter note, an observant viewer thought the SWAT team looked like Mutant Ninja Turtles.

Sleep tight, Florida, Sheriff Grimmell's boys are out there, looking after you. – Editor **CT**

Religion and the fate of the masses

A force for good, or a tool for controlling the masses?
Brian Mitchell collects a few choice quotes

“As priestcraft was always the enemy of knowledge, because priestcraft supports itself by keeping people in delusion and ignorance, it was consistent with its policy to make the acquisition of knowledge a real sin.” – *Thomas Paine*.

“It is an act of virtue to deceive and lie, when by such means the interest of the church might be promoted.” – *Bishop Eusebius*. 260 – 339

“The Rich man in his castle The poor man at the gate God made them, high or lowly And ordered their estate.” – *From the hymn All Things Bright and Beautiful*.

“The good Lord gave me my money.” – *US multi-millionaire John Rockefeller*.

“The Catholic Church . . . upheld feudalism, then monarchism, warning them of growing evils and possible revolutions. In the same manner, and under the same reservations, she now upholds capitalism... The capitalist class knows no country and no race, and any “God” suits it so that “God” approves of the exploitation of the worker . . . Hence it foments race and religious animosities that come down from the past.” – *US socialist Daniel DeLeon (1852-1914)*.

“The Church has condemned the various forms of Marxist Socialism . . .

because it is her permanent right and duty to safeguard men from currents of thought and influence that jeopardise their eternal salvation.” – *Pope Pius XII*.

“The Church has the right to require that the faithful shall not publish books which she has not previously officially examined, and to prohibit their publication by anybody whatsoever for just cause. The provisions of this title also apply to daily publications, periodicals, and other published writings of whatever kind... “ – *Code of Canon Laws of the Catholic Church*.

“When wilt thou save the people? O God of mercy! when? The people, Lord! the people! Not thrones and crowns, but men! God save the people! thine they are; Thy children, as thy angels fair; Save them from bondage and despair! God save the people!” – *British Chartist leader Ebenezer Elliott, The People’s Anthem*.

“The Church doesn’t believe in book-burning, but it believes in restricting the use of dangerous books among those whose minds are unprepared for them . . . The Church has, through the centuries, understood that ideas are really more dangerous than other weapons. Their use should be restricted.” – *(US Monsignor Francis Lally)*

“Let Catholic writers take care when defending the cause of the working class and the poor not to use language calculated to inspire among the people aversion to the upper class of society . . . Human society, as established by God, is composed of unequal elements, just as parts of the human body are unequal; to make them all equal is impossible, and would mean the destruction of human society itself.” – *Pope Pius X, letter to Bishops on Catholic Social Action, 1903*.

“I did not see why the schoolmaster should be taxed to support the priest, and not the priest the schoolmaster.” – *US philosopher and historian Henry David Thoreau*.

“But it is important to note why [the Church] has been persecuted. Not any and every priest has been persecuted, not any and every institution has been attacked. That part of the church has been attacked and persecuted that put itself on the side of the people and went to the people’s defence. Here again we find the same key to understanding the persecution of the church: the poor.” – *Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador, who always spoke for the poor, killed while celebrating mass. Another thirty supporters of the poor were killed at his funeral*.

“I took the repeal of the Corn Laws as light amusement compared with the difficult task of inducing the priests of all denominations to agree to suffer the people to be educated.” – *British MP Richard Cobden*.

Brian Mitchell is a London-based author and journalist. He is a former trade union organiser and teacher.

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